

Prayers & Potatoes

By Ray Goldrup
(Based on a true story)

Everyone was hungry.
Didn't God care?

"Whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials" (Alma 36:3).

June 15, 1851

My mother made me this journal, and this is my first time writing in it. My name is Patrick O'Hurley. I am 11 years old, and I live with my family on a potato farm in Ireland. A potato famine has been going for five years now. Many people have died from hunger and disease,

like my friend Bartholomew and my grandmother Melvina.

Everyone is hungry, even my dog, Whiskers. He keeps chewing on my shoes, no matter where I hide them!

August 1

I don't know if God really cares. Da and Ma say He does. They say we just have to have faith, but the famine is still going on. Why doesn't God answer my family's prayers? I think maybe He has forgotten about

us. We're only potato farmers—maybe we're not important enough for Him to remember.

August 27

Two Mormon missionaries visited us yesterday. They spoke about God and His Son and a plan God has for everyone, even us. The missionaries said we are children of God and that each one of us is very important to Him. At first I wasn't sure about it, but last night I prayed hard, and I felt something inside of me. A feeling as warm as the blanket Ma made me to use on cold winter nights.

August 29

The missionaries helped us understand the reason for trials. We learned that difficulties help us grow and test our faith so we can become more like Heavenly Father. I asked them why some trials go on and on, and the tall one said, "If all our trials were fixed in a single moment, how could we become stronger inside? Our

legs couldn't become stronger if we could climb any mountain in a single step."

January 7, 1852

My faith is a lot stronger now, and I am happy. The famine has not ended yet, but we know that in the Lord's good time it will. We prayed we could leave Ireland, and Heavenly Father has provided a way. We will be leaving for Canada in about two weeks. I know now that it is after the trials that the blessings come.

January 8

Whiskers still chews on my shoes. Da says it keeps me humble. Then he laughed. So did everybody else. Even me. We know blessings come after our trials, so I asked Ma if after Whiskers chews my shoes up, I will be able to get a brand new pair. I didn't hear what she said because Da laughed even louder! ♦

THE GREAT HUNGER

Ireland is a beautiful green island west of Great Britain.

In Patrick's time, potatoes were the main food for many people.

Around 1845 a plant disease, or "blight," infected the potato crop in Ireland.

From 1846 to 1852, the harvests were so small that there was a famine. The Irish call this time "the Great Hunger."

Many died from starvation or disease. Many others—like Patrick's family—had to leave Ireland.