

Patrick born too early

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [May 2, 2012](#) issue

In my first family, the children were referred to not only
By their given names and often their religious names also,
But often by an identifying characterization as well: John
Kevin the Math Genius, for example. Our sister, a nun, is
Betsy God Bless Her, and our youngest brother is Thomas
More Patrick the School Principal; Peter Joseph in Denver
Is in the middle with your humble scribe Brian the Writer.
It doesn't matter if the child is current or past tense, either;
Our oldest brother is Seamus Who Went On Ahead, whom
None of his brothers or sister has yet met, and there is tiny
Christopher Who Died in His First Hour, whom we expect
To meet also at some undetermined hour. And there is our
Brother Patrick Born Too Early, born just halfway through
His wet voyage, and so he could not breathe, but that child
Would have been a giant, says our mother quietly—he was
Tremendous in size even half born, my blessed boy Patrick.
So it is that sometimes there are five children at dinner and
Sometimes more. I suppose this happens to lots of families.
We don't talk about it. Time seethes like the sea. But there,
This morning, at the end of the table, is my brother Seamus,
His mouth filled with stars. If I close my eyes I can see him