

Meditation SAINT COLUMBA 24th May 2022

Columba is famous as being the Irish monk who evangelised Scotland , a very early Christian missionary. His Feast Day is on the 9th June .

He was born in Donegal in 521 AD , of noble descent and he was baptised “ Crimthan “ (Wolf) . When he entered a monastery aged 19 he took the name “ Colum “ (Dove) and the two sides of his character played out throughout his life . From a young age he showed a great love for spiritual contemplation and became known for his gentleness towards animals and compassion towards people. Columba loved nature, he saw God in the whole of Creation. He revered trees in particular , “he feared the sound of the axe on them more than hell” He established monasteries at Durrow and Kells but then fled Ireland after refusing to hand over a Manuscript and calling his clansmen to arms which resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

He famously vowed to convert as many people to Christ as there were soldiers killed in the Battle of Cul Dremne after leaving his homeland in 563 AD . He visited communities all over Dal Raita , preaching the word of God , eventually establishing a community on Iona, an island granted to Columba by the Pictish King. A church and dwellings were built there in 565AD . This had resounding results. The monastery on Iona became the mother house of the Columban monasteries in Ireland and of an increasing number of Columban monasteries in Scotland and England during the next hundred years. It became his most famous monastery, a mission centre , a training centre for monks and evangelists like Aidan for example who was sent from here, later on, to Lindisfarne, becoming the “apostle to the English”

At one time there were 1000 monks on Iona who spread the faith throughout Scotland and as far away as Italy and Iceland. Columba spread the word of God to peasants and kings alike. He worked tirelessly to evangelise the pagans. He also liked to go away and pray in silence for long periods of time away from people . There are many accounts of his many conversations with angels, his miracles and prophetic visions. He became well known as a Holy Man, a leader and a miracle worker calling Iona a “Thin Place” where Heaven and earth are barely separated. He predicted that Iona would return to be a mere grazing place but that in the future it would be restored as an important place of mission. This did come to pass and Iona after years of desolation is today once again a centre of Celtic worship and pilgrimage- you may have seen a recent television programme of a re-enacted pilgrimage to Iona, following Columba’s footsteps by some celebrities.

God loved all of Columba – his wolf side and his dove side . He showed true repentance for the battle in Ireland and was blessed with God’s forgiveness. His mission on Iona had a huge impact on the development and spread of early Christianity. To me it is so interesting how such long spells were spent in contemplative prayer away from his busy mission work. How he yearned for those quiet times to listen to God. Columba said that there were “ three labours in the day, which are prayers, physical work and reading” He recommended that “ Your measure of prayer shall be until your tears come” and “ Your measure of physical work shall be until you have much perspiration “

Prayer of St Columba

Be a bright flame before me O God,
A guiding star above me, a smooth path
below me,
A kindly shepherd behind me
Today, tonight, forever
Alone with none but you my God
I journey on my way
What need I fear
When you are near , O Lord of night and day
More secure am I within your hand
Than if a multitude did round me stand. Amen

Prayer of St Columba

Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Eternal ever Blessed God
To me unworthy servant, to me allow
That I may keep a door in Heaven,
The smallest door, the one that is least used.
But in your house, O Lord,
That I may see your glory, even from afar'
And hear your voice, O God, and know
That I am with you – You O God

Prayer of St Columba

Let me bless Almighty God,
Whose power extends over sea and land
Whose angels watch over all
Let me study sacred books to calm my soul:
I pray for peace,

Kneeling at heaven's gates.
Let me do my daily work,
Gathering seaweed, catching fish,
Giving food to the poor.
Let me say my daily prayers,
Sometimes chanting, sometimes quiet,
Always thanking God
Delightful it is to live on a powerful isle, in a
quiet cell,
Serving the King of kings.

Song of St Columba

On some island I long to be,
A rocky promontory, looking on
The coiling surface of the sea.
To see the waves, crest on crest
Of the great , shing ocean, composing
A hymn to the Creator without rest.
To see without sadness the strand
Lined with bright shells and birds
Lamenting overhead, a lonely sound.
To hear the whisper of small waves
Against the rocks, that endless sea-sound,
Like keening over graves.
To watch the seabirds sailing
In flocks and most marvellous
Of monsters, the turning whale.
To see the shift from ebbtide
To flood and tell my secret name:
"He who set his back on Ireland"

A Blessing of St Columba

See that you be at peace among yourselves,
my children,

And love one another.

Follow the example of the wise and the good,

And God will comfort you and help you,

Both in this world

And in the world which is to come. Amen