



St. Colmcille, 521-597 A.D.

Feast Day: 9<sup>th</sup> June

- St. Colmcille was born in a place called 'Gartan' in Co. Donegal in 521 A.D. and is said to have been a descendant of the famous 'Niall of the Nine Hostages'.
- He was baptised 'Criomthann' which meant 'Fox', This may be because he had red hair.
- He was born at a time when many Irish people had already converted to Christianity.



- The nickname 'Colmcille' means 'Dove of the Church', which his friends were said to have called him because of the many hours he spent praying in the chapel, in his younger years
- He is sometimes called 'St. Columba' because Columba is the latin word for 'dove'



## Early years: Training to be a priest

- St. Colmcille studied to become a priest in **Moville**, Co. Down under St. Finian
- He later moved to a monastery in Clonard, Co. Westmeath and studied under St. Finian of **Clonard** (different to Finian of Moville)
- He met St. Ciarán and many other Irish saints there. In fact there were 12 very close friends who studied at Clonard who were later declared saints, and St. Colmcille was one of them. People started to call them the **'Twelve Apostles of Ireland'**



## Colmcille and his monasteries...

- When Colmcille had finished his studies, he set up monasteries around Ireland. These monasteries were like little villages or parishes and from them, many large towns grew.
- He founded his 1<sup>st</sup> monastery in Derry (originally called 'Doire Colm Chille' or 'Oak tree of Colmcille')
- After that he founded two more in Raphoe, Co. Donegal and Durrow, Co. Offaly and later one in Kells, Co. Meath. There were also two other monasteries in Clonmore, Co. Meath and in Swords, Co. Dublin.

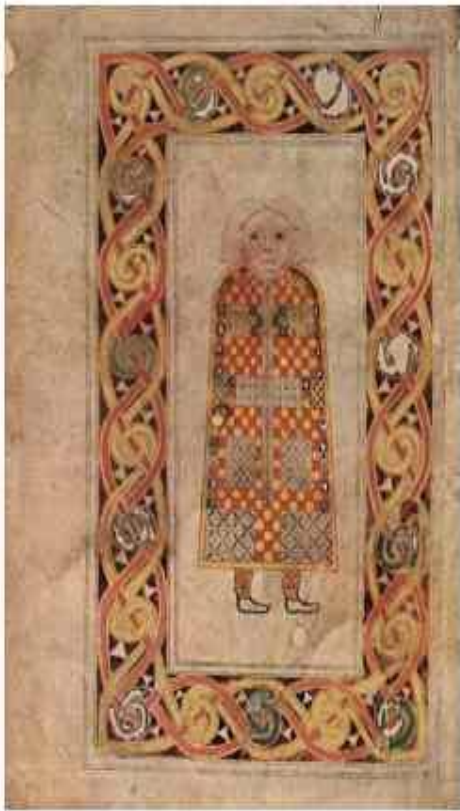




# Manuscripts and Monasteries

- At the time of Colmcille, books were written by hand. So, in order to get a copy of a book, it had to be copied by hand
- The word 'manus' means 'hand' and the word 'scribo' means 'write' in Latin so a 'manuscript' was a piece of handwriting!
- The monks who lived in monasteries spent much of their time writing out these 'manuscripts', often using the hides of animals as their paper (Vellum)
- They wrote down the Gospel stories and made many copies of them.
- Two of the most famous of these manuscripts are the 'Book of Durrow' and the 'Book of Kells'

# The Book of Durrow



**The Man symbol of Matthew**  
Folio 85v



**The Eagle of St Mark**  
Folio 84v



**The Ox of St Luke**  
Folio 124v



**The Lion of St John**  
Folio 191v



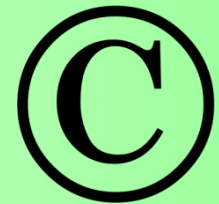
# The Book of Kells





# Copyright!

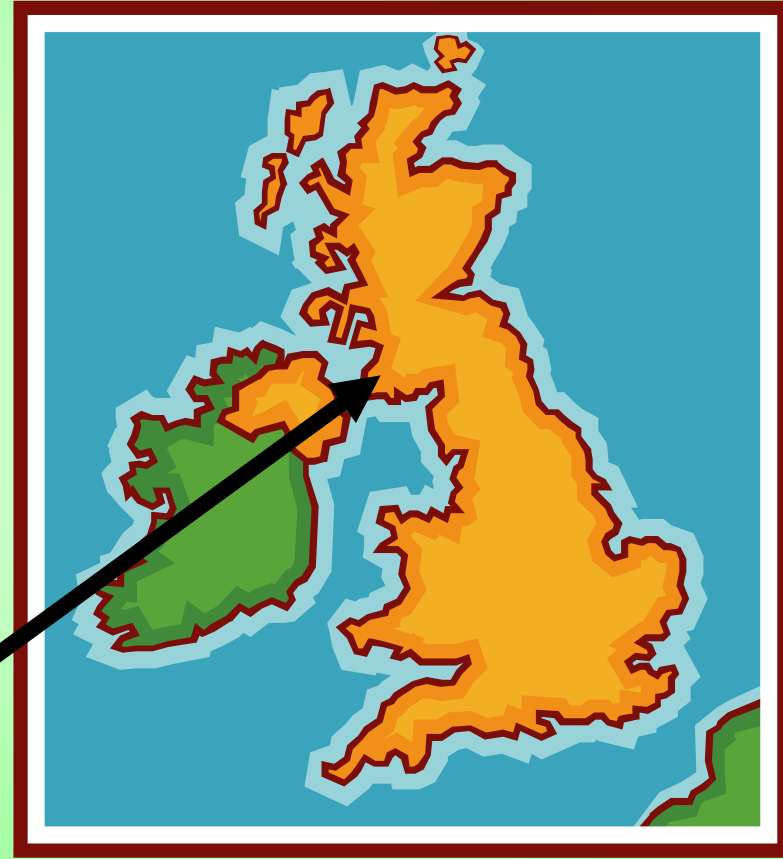
- When Colmcille was studying at the monastery in Moville, it was normal for the monks to copy books by hand and they were very good at it.
- However, Colmcille decided to copy a book in secret and not tell St. Finian about it.
- There was a great argument about this and even King Diarmait had to advise the monks on what should be done
- King Diarmait said **‘to every cow its calf and to every book its copy’**. This may have been the first case of copyright!



# Exiled to Iona..

- St. Colmcille had got into a lot of trouble for copying the book in secret and there had even been a battle over it.
- So as a way of making up for the harm he had caused, he was sent to an island called '**Iona**' just off the coast of Scotland.
- He started a monastery there and through prayer became a very holy and wise man.

**Iona**





Iona Abbey, Isle of Iona



## St. Colmcille, Apostle of Scotland

- Colmcille and the monks that lived with him in Iona, built a fleet of boats and set out for Scotland and Northern England and preached the Gospel wherever they went.
- He became so friendly with the Scottish that they even asked him to crown their King in a ceremony at the church he built on Iona.
- He is known as the 'Apostle of Scotland' because of this.



St. Colmcille has shown us a great example of 'starting over'. He was sent away because of his wrongdoings, but he is now called a saint because of the way he changed his life and spread the good news of Jesus to others.



# Prayer

St. Colmcille, thank you for showing us that through prayer and penance, we can make up for any sins we have committed and 'start over' again!

St. Colmcille, on this your feast day, pray for us!





# Question Time!

- What bird did Colmcille get his name from?
- Who said 'to every cow its calf and to every book its copy'?
- What famous books came from Colmcille's monasteries?
- The island of Iona is off the coast of which country?

# Activities

- Look up the monastery locations on a map of Ireland, are there any monasteries near you?
- Find out more about the Book of Kells, [www.bookofkells.ie](http://www.bookofkells.ie)
- Watch the animated movie 'The Secret of Kells', it was nominated for an Oscar.
- Find out some more words that have Latin origins: <http://www.math.ubc.ca/~cass/frivs/latin/latin-dict-full.html>