

# PRAYING WITH THE CELTIC SAINTS



## ST COLUMBA OF IONA

**We light this candle because Christ is the Light no darkness can extinguish**



In the name of the sending Father.  
In the name of the Son of the call.  
In the name of the Dove descending.  
In the name of the One in All.

## WE OPEN OURSELVES TO THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

If you come in certainty or confusion,  
in anger or in anguish:  
*this time is for us.*

If you come in silent suffering or hidden sorrow,  
in pain or promise:  
*this time is for us.*

If you come for your own or another's need,  
for a private wound or the wound of the world:  
*this time is for us.*

If you come and you do not know why,  
to be here is enough:  
*this time is for us.*

Come now, Christ of the forgiving warmth.  
Come now, Christ of the yearning tears.  
Come now, Christ of the transforming touch.  
*This time is for you.*

**AMEN**

## 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, shining 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.'

## SCRIPTURE

*1 John 2 : 5-6*

But if anyone obeys his word, love of God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him : whoever claims to live in him, must live as Jesus did.

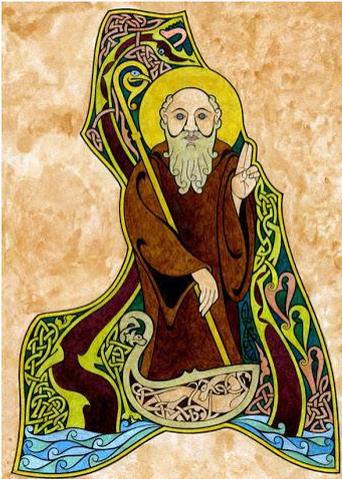
*Luke 5 : 16*

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

## THE LIFE OF ST COLUMBA

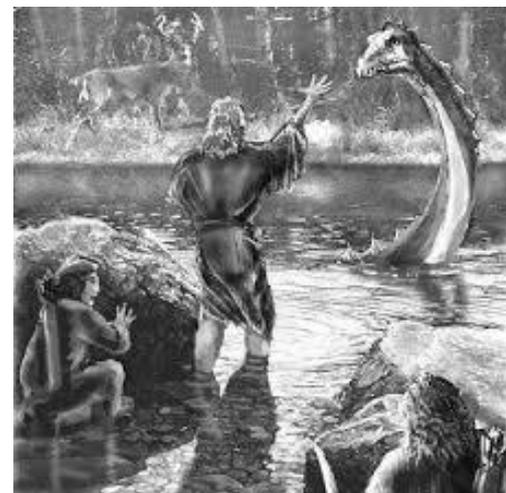
Born in Donegal in 521 into the nobility, he was baptised 'Crimthan' (Wolf). Aged 19, he joined a monastery and took the name 'Colum' (Dove). He established his first monastery in Derry on an existing, Druidic, sacred oak grove. Columba was said to revere trees and feared the sound of the axe on them more than hell. He was well-known as a great organiser, poet/song writer and prophet.

Having established many monasteries in Ireland, all was going well, until in his forties, he became embroiled in a copyright dispute. Finnian, the head of the monastery at Clonard, had transcribed the Psalms, making personal notes in the margin. Columba copied this and tried to take his copy away with him. When Finnian objected, a legal dispute ensued and was settled in favour of Finnian. Columba was known to have a very fiery temper and the situation escalated into a military battle! When it was over, Columba was banished from Ireland and he famously vowed to convert as many souls to Christ as there were soldiers killed in the copyright conflict.



He left his homeland and headed for Scotland, landing on several islands before settling on Iona. It was a place from which he could not see his beloved Ireland, so would not be tempted to return. It was on Iona that Columba founded his most famous monastery and mission. At one time, there were over 1,000 monks on Iona, who spread the faith, not only throughout these islands, but to places such as Italy and Iceland. It was from here that Aidan would be sent to Lindisfarne to become 'The Apostle to the English.' Inspired by the life and disciplines of Columba, his mission would have an immeasurable effect in England.

Columba was a tireless evangelist – converting kings and peasants. Many accounts exist of his miracles : the King of the Picts was converted when Columba raised his daughter from the dead. He cured humans, animals and crops, stilled storms and even saved a swimmer from the Loch Ness Monster! Central to his life were his well-recorded encounters with angels. Columba's many prophecies were extraordinarily accurate in their detail. He foretold his own death in 597 and his monks carried him round Iona one last time.



He blessed his brethren and prophesied over Iona, calling it a 'Thin Place' – where heaven and earth are barely separated. He predicted that it would return to a mere grazing place, but that one day, it would be restored as an important place of mission. This prophecy has been fulfilled in our lifetime : in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Iona was sacked by raiders and left desolate until the Iona Community was founded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, becoming, once again, a principal centre for Celtic worship and mission.

## REFLECTION



Columba came to Iona full of guilt and remorse, looking for resurrection. His faith was firmly rooted in the Lord Jesus and the knowledge that Easter Sunday always follows Good Friday. His life demonstrates that from tragedy, God can bring great blessing, once repentance and true devotion are recognised as the keys to the future.

Columba was well known for isolating himself for long periods of time to pray. His prophetic ministry and angelic encounters came through his prolonged and regular practice of withdrawing from the busy life of the monastery and mission work to engage in contemplative prayer – a time of dwelling in the Divine Presence – no words needed.

These extraordinary times in which we live, give us the space and freedom to follow the example of St Columba - to deepen our times of stillness with God and increase our ability to hear God's voice.

Let us embrace this opportunity that lies before us. The opportunity for *'prolonged immersion in the rivers of tranquility, which flow from God into the whole universe and draw all things back to God'* (Thomas Merton)

*Out of adversity, opportunity. Out of tragedy, blessing.*

## OUR PRAYERS



When the world tells us that we are what we do with  
our activity, our acumen or achievement  
**may we turn around and learn:**  
*We are what we do with our silence.*

When the world tells us that we are what we do with  
our spending power, selling power or our power of speech  
**may we turn around and learn:**  
*We are what we do with our silence.*

When the world tells us to drown the silent suffering of others with  
indifference or noise or to forget the art of  
stillness in the storm  
**may we turn around and learn:**  
*We are what we do with our silence.*

When the world tells us to rush in where angels fear to tread  
**may we turn around and learn:**  
*that angels listen first, before they take a step,  
for the voice of God in the silence. Amen.*

## A CIRCLE PRAYER FOR THE WORLD



Circle, O God, all those who work to protect and heal others.  
**We name before you those uppermost in our thoughts at this time:**

*Keep health within, keep sickness out;  
Keep strength within, keep weariness out.*

Circle, O God, all those who are feeling isolated and lonely.

**Help us to help them know that they are not forgotten:**

*Keep peace within, keep turmoil out;  
Keep light within, keep darkness out.*

Circle, O God, all those who suffer the effects of conflict, famine, disease and homelessness.

**We name before you the people and places we carry on our hearts:**

*Keep hope within, keep despair out;  
Keep light within, keep darkness out.*

Circle, O God, all those who work for peace. Encircle them with your presence.

*Keep wisdom within, keep folly out;  
Keep light within, keep darkness out.*

Circle, O God, those known to us, who are in need of your healing today, those who have died and those who mourn them

*May they know your love and presence.  
Help them to see your light in the darkness.*

*Lord, make us a channel of your blessing that we, like St Columba, might play our part in bringing your light into the world and your healing to those in need. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

### BLESSING

May the faith of Columba be ours in our watching and our waiting.

May the peace of Columba be ours in our going and our returning.

May angels watch over us through our waking and sleeping.

May the God of Columba shield us and those we love and pray for  
on this day and always.

**Amen**

## THE FINAL WORDS OF ST COLUMBA

*'Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing'*