



Diocese of Youngstown 75th Anniversary Learning: St. Columba Grades 3-6

Objective: To explore how to live out our Gospel call by learning about the life of St. Columba.

Supplies

- Plain paper, two for each child
- Markers
- Scissors
- Tape
- Bible
- Story of St. Columba

I. Engage the life experience

- In your own words: Today we'll be talking about how Saint Columba trusted in God's guidance, and how he can inspire us today.
- Give them each a sheet of plain paper, markers to share, tape to share, scissors.
- Have them use the paper to make a symbol of something they like to do. It could show a subject they're interested in, a place they like to go, a sport they're involved in, anything that is one of their favorite things to do. It will be taped on their backs, so it should be sized accordingly. When they are done, have them help each other to tape it to the back of their clothing.

II. Explore the concepts: The Story of Saint Columba

- In your own words: We're going to talk about the story of a man who loved to do things in his world as you love to do things in ours. At the same time he was doing those things, he listened carefully for God's voice. Listening to God took him far from home and gave him a life of adventure. He is the patron saint of our Diocese: Saint Columba.
- Read: The Story of Saint Columba
- Discuss:
 - What did you like best of Columba's qualities?
 - If Saint Columba came to visit this group, what might he say?
- In the cathedral of our diocese is a stained glass window over the front door, with symbols from the stories of the life of Saint Columba. The window is divided into 49 openings. There are symbols about the sacraments and other designs. There are 23 symbols just about Saint Columba, including:
 - A dog, a cat, a bird, which symbolize companions that Columba had in his life, and that he loved and cherished all God's creatures.
 - A demon coming out of a well shows the story of Saint Columba purifying a polluted spring of water
 - A sailboat reminds us of how he traveled from Ireland to Scotland.
 - A panel with the names St. Patrick, St. Brigid, and St. Columba remind us that these three are the most remembered of Irish saints.

III. Reflect and integrate with the lived experience:

- How can St. Columba, who lived so many years ago, give you an example of how to live today?
- Read aloud Colossians 3:12-14 (“You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body.”)
- In your own words: God cares about us – what we do, how we live, what our lives are like. But God’s first concern is the kind of people we are. Are we cranky and selfish and critical, or are we kind and caring and loving?

IV. Respond with a way of living:

- Have them use a second sheet of paper to make a symbol for the kind of person they want to be. (e.g. a heart for a loving person, or a dollar bill for a generous person, a peace sign for someone who keeps people together). Remind them of the qualities of a Christian disciple.
- When they are done, have them tape their symbols to the front of their clothes. Have them explain their symbols.
- In your own words: Just as you added the symbols to your clothes, God wants you to add Christ’s qualities to your life as you grow. We call Columba “Saint” not because he was perfect, but because he heroically tried to live as God called him to live.

IV. Wrap-Up Prayer

**Almighty God,
thank you for giving us Saint Columba
to show us the way to live according to your Word.
He loved you,
he loved other people,
and he followed your commandments.
Give us courage to be the kind of followers of Jesus
that you want us to be.
Amen.**

The Story of Saint Columba (521-597)*

Grades 4-6

Do you like learning?

Maybe you like school because you get to be with your friends. And maybe you like learning a certain subject that you're taught in school.

You might like learning in other places, too, like discovering what's under the grass in your yard, or looking at the sky to see how planes leave trails behind them, or studying and knowing all the rules of your favorite sport or game.

Saint Columba loved learning and wanted other people to learn, too. He was born about 1500 years ago, before the internet, before computers, even before printing presses. He had many adventures, and most of them were about finding places to do what he loved: learning and teaching about God.

He was born in Ireland, and his name in the Irish language is Colmcille (pronounced like "calm" and "kill.") It means "church dove." In Latin, it's written Columba, and that's the name we know him by.

He was brought up by his family as a Christian. He was educated by priests and eventually became a priest himself. He traveled around Ireland, preaching and teaching. Christianity had been brought to Ireland by missionaries (the most famous of them is Saint Patrick) more than 100 years before Columba was born, and it had grown and spread among the Irish people. Columba wanted to help to spread it to even more people and to deepen the faith among those who already had it. He helped to establish monasteries in Ireland, centers of learning, praying, and serving people of the time.

There's a story told about Columba that tells about his love of learning and books. Another Irish holy man, Saint Finnian, allowed Columba to read his book of Psalms. All books in their time were written out by hand. Columba decided to make a copy of the book. When Columba gave the original book back to Finnian, Finnian wanted the copy, too. They got into an argument that got to be so big, it involved their families and maybe even a battle. It had to be settled by a king in Ireland who said, "To every cow belongs her calf, and therefore to every book belongs its copy." Columba had to give Finnian the book he had made. The story shows how much work Columba was willing to do in order to have his own book containing the Psalms from the Bible. It also shows that saints sometimes do things (like getting into huge arguments) that don't sound very holy, but after they realize what they did wrong, they can ask for forgiveness. Saints aren't perfect people; they are people who seek in heroic ways to follow Christ.

When he was about 40 years old, Columba came to believe that God was calling him to leave Ireland and go to Scotland to spread his love of Jesus and of learning, and to use what he knew about monasteries to establish one there. In the year 562, he left Ireland with twelve companions to find a deserted place to set up a new life. They went to a

small island, Iona, in western Scotland. They built up what would become one of the most famous monasteries in Europe.

Iona was the center for spreading Christianity in Scotland, and beyond. Reading and writing had been important in the monasteries that Columba started in Ireland, and they were in Iona, too. There was a writing office, a library, and a school. Columba taught not just with books, though, but also by setting an example of how a Christian lives. He was known for settling rivalries among kings and tribes, and bringing peace to people who had been fighting each other. He became known as a person of prayer and wisdom. He was famous in his time, and those who knew him wanted him to be remembered after his death as a holy hero. They collected stories about him, and that's how we know of him fifteen centuries later.

Today, he is more famous in Ireland and Scotland than in America. But as people of the Diocese of Youngstown, we have the privilege to remember him, and to ask him to pray for us now, because he is the patron saint of our diocese.

*Note to catechists: There is another Irish saint named Columban or Columbanus, who live roughly the same time as Columba. Columban (543-615) was known for founding monasteries in France and Italy. If you're googling something, be sure you're looking at Columba or Colmcille (also Columcille, Columbcille, Columkille, etc.) from County Donegal, Ireland, and not Columban or Columbanus from County Meath.

49 openings: ↓



**Saint Columba Cathedral
154 West Wood Street, Youngstown, OH 44503**

Close-up of some of the stained glass panels, with symbols of sacraments and stories from the life of Saint Columba

