

Diocese of Youngstown 75th Anniversary Learning:

St. Columba

Grades 7-8

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

Supplies

- Bible
- Story of St. Columba

I. Engage the life experience

- In your own words: Today we'll be talking about how Saint Columba allowed God to guide him, and how he can inspire us today.
- Ask them what being a Christian means to them.
- Ask them to characterize a Christian. What ways do Christians show faith, what kinds of work are they known for, how can you tell if a person follows Christ?

II. Explore the concepts: The Story of Saint Columba

- In your own words: You're going to learn the story of a man who tried to follow Christ and act the way to which a Christian is called. Following his call 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:
 - Do you know anyone who is like Columba?
 - If Saint Columba came to visit this group, what might he say?
 - How can you learn to listen to God?
 - How can you help to attract people to Jesus?
- 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.”)
- Tell them in your own words: God cares about you – what you do, how you live, what your life is like. But God’s first concern is the kind of person you are.

IV. Respond with a way of living:

- Now have them work in groups to develop a case that a person they are aware of (living or dead, famous or known only to their family) should be named a saint. Have them consider what the person would be known for, what good works the saint does or did, and how others would know that the person followed Christ. If they were to design a stained-glass window about this person, what symbols would they put on it?
- When they are done, have them talk about the person either in small groups or as one large group.
- In your own words, say: We call Columba “Saint” not because he was perfect, but because he heroically tried to live as God called him to live. We are called by God to live in such a way that someone could make a case for us to be called “Saint.” Try out “Saint” before their names.

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 7-8

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.

Everything you learn helps you to figure out the world you live in, how things work, why you're here, and how you can make the world a better place.

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 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. 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 forgiveness for. Saints aren't perfect people; they are people who seek in heroic ways to follow Christ.

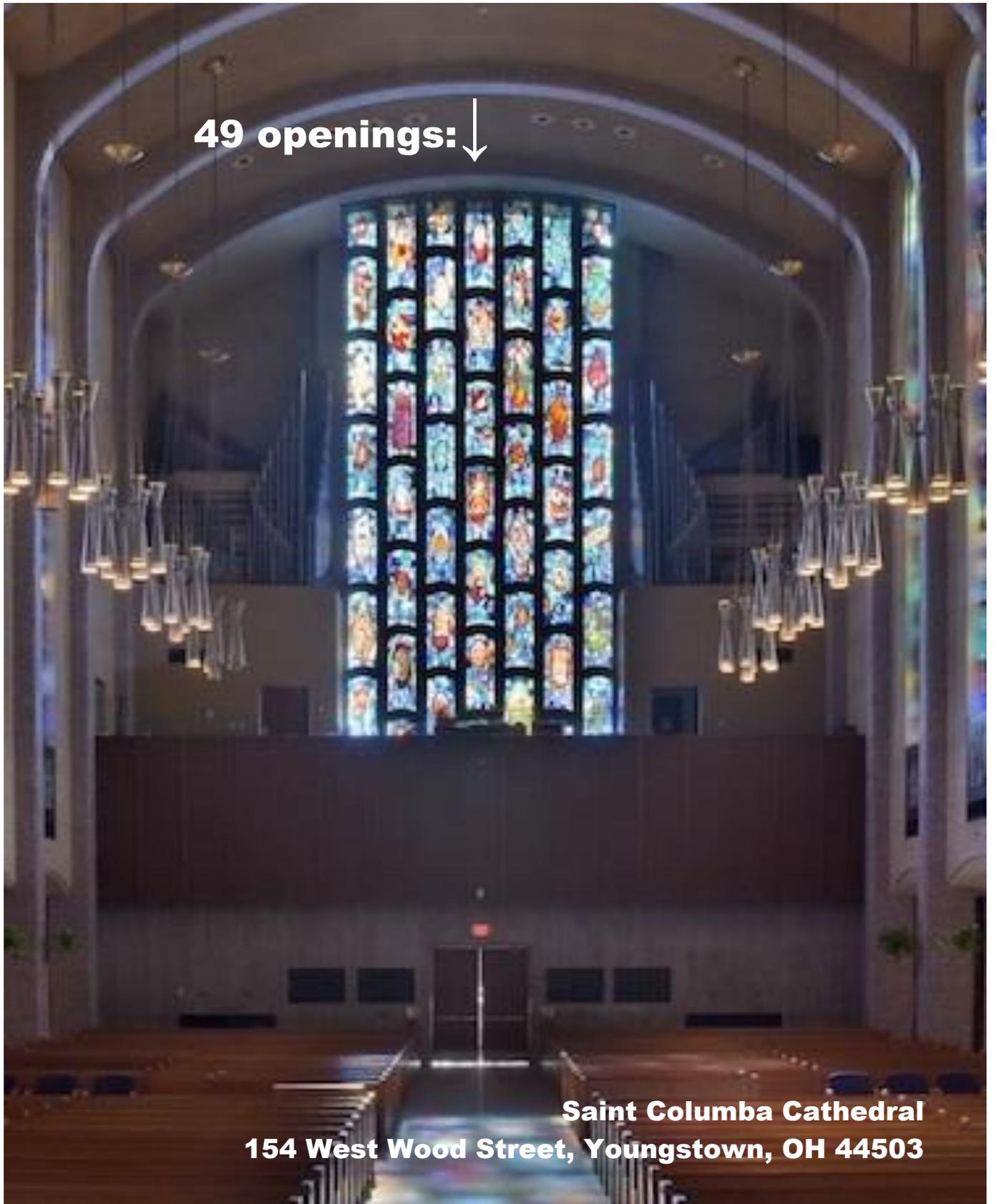
When he was about 40 years old, Columba came to believe that God was calling him to leave Ireland and go to Scotland to spread his love of Jesus and of learning, and to use what he knew about monasteries to establish one there. In the year 562, he left Ireland

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 Christians 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

