



Diocese of Youngstown 75th Anniversary Learning: Saint Columba Intergenerational Gathering

Objectives:

- Explore and understand the life of Saint Columba as a person who responded generously to God's call.
- Appreciate the importance of understanding the gifts of the saint stories
- Embrace God's call to share their own gifts generously.

As people enter the gathering space, invite them to put their names on their nametags under the word "Saint."

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 to discuss what saints they know of, what they know about those saints, and how they would describe those saints to people who never heard of them.
- Ask them at the tables to discuss the characteristics of the saints they discussed, and if anyone they know has those characteristics.
- Invite a person from each table to stand up and say the names of the saints they discussed.
- Explain in your own words: saints come in at least three varieties:
 - those our Church has recognized as special, like St. Patrick, St. Francis, or St. Columba;
 - those who have gone before us, like our great grandparents; whose names may not be known but who lives as God called them to;
 - and those around us who love God and follow Jesus.

Supplies

- Story of St. Columba, copy for each table of the gathering (do not distribute until after you have read it to the group)
- Volunteers to silently enact the story: as few as four but as many as want to
- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Nametags with "Saint" written at the top

II. Explore the concepts: The Story of Saint Columba

- In your own words: We'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.
- Ask for volunteers to enact the story. Parts are indicated in the story.
- Read: The Story of Saint Columba

III. Reflect and integrate with the lived experience:

- Distribute the printed story with discussion questions. Have them discuss the questions at the tables.

IV. Respond with a way of living:

- Now have them work at their tables 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.
- When they have done, have each table report on the person to one large group.

OPTION

- Columba cared about books. Have them discuss something at tables that would benefit the local library, or bring books to children in a nearby health care facility, or start a book exchange in the parish. Have each table report and then decide which idea in the room can be implemented.

IV. Wrap-Up Prayer

Play Celtic music in the background in honor of Saint Columba. Have them pray this ancient Irish prayer, attributed to the saint:

Let me thank almighty God,
whose power extends over sea and land.
Let me study sacred books to calm my soul.
I pray for peace,
kneeling before heaven.
Let me do my daily work,
catching fish,
giving food to the poor.
Let me say my daily prayers,
sometimes out loud, sometimes quiet,
always thanking God.
Delightful it is to live
on a peaceful island, in a quiet room,
serving the King of kings.

*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 of Iona (also Columcille, Columbcille, Columkille, etc.) from County Donegal, Ireland, and not Columban or Columbanus from County Meath

The Story of Saint Columba (521-597)

INTERGENERATIONAL

Saint Columba 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.” [HAVE SOMEONE USE THEIR HANDS or ARMS TO IMITATE THE FLYING OF A DOVE]

In Latin, his name is written Columba, and that’s the name we know him by here, although in Ireland he is more often called Colmcille.

He was brought up by his family as a Christian. [HAVE TWO PEOPLE SILENTLY ENACT BEING PARENTS AND ONE BE THE YOUNG COLUMBA]

He was educated by priests and eventually became a priest himself. [HAVE TWO PEOPLE SILENTLY ENACT BEING PRIESTS AND ONE BE AN OLDER COLUMBA]

He traveled around Ireland, preaching and teaching. [HAVE SOMEONE SILENTLY ENACT WALKING 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. [HAVE TWO PEOPLE ENACT THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF A BOOK]

All books in their time were written out by hand. Columba decided to make a copy of the book. [ENACT THE WRITING]

When Columba gave the original book back to Finnian, Finnian wanted the copy, too. [THE TWO TO ACT THIS OUT]

They got into an argument that got to be so big, it involved their families. [EVERY ONE OF THE VOLUNTEERS TO CHOOSE SIDES AND GLARE OPPOSITE EACH OTHER]

It had to be settled by a king in Ireland who said, [A KING TO MAKE A PROCLAMATION]

“To every cow belongs her calf, and therefore to every book belongs its copy.” Columba had to give Finnian the book he had made. [ENACT]

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 **[ENACT PRAYER AND LISTENING TO GOD]** 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. **[GROUP OF THIRTEEN IF POSSIBLE GET IN BOAT]**

They went to a small island, Iona, in western Scotland. They built up what would become one of the most famous monasteries in Europe. **[ENACT CONSTRUCTION]**

Iona was the center for spreading Christianity in Scotland, and beyond. Reading and writing **[ENACT]** 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, **[ENACT]**

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.

[ENACT TALKING AND PASSING DOWN STORIES]

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.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What about Columba do you think made people who knew him want to call him "Saint?"

If you were going to ask Saint Columba to help you with some task, what would you like him to pray for you about that you think he would especially understand and care about?

Everyone has "saint" written in front of their name on their nametags. Each person must name one quality they have that is a good saintly quality.