

# The Prophet Elisha Prefigures Saint Columba of Iona

There are three similarities between:

- The Prophet Elisha (Old Testament)
- Saint Columba (Missionary to Scotland)

**Parallel-1)** Each saint resurrected a deceased boy. He did so for a righteous family.

**Parallel-2)** Near a river, each saint rescued his student. He did so miraculously.

**Parallel-3)** Each saint was bald. Either totally or partly.

To understand the first two parallels, you need to know certain stories about Saint Columba. These stories were written down by Adomnán of Iona. See the next section.

# **STORIES OF SAINT COLUMBA**

**From: The Life of Columba**

**Author: Adomnán of Iona / Circa AD 700**

**From:** The Liturgy Archive / Saint Columba of Iona

[www.liturgies.net/saints/columba](http://www.liturgies.net/saints/columba)

## **FIRST STORY**

### **Of the Boy whom the Holy Man Raised from the Dead, in the name of the Lord Christ**

At the time when St. Columba was tarrying for some days in the province of the Picts, a certain peasant who, with his whole family, had listened to and learned through an interpreter the word of life preached by the holy man, believed and was baptized the husband, together with his wife, children, and domestics.

A very few days after his conversion, one of the sons of this householder was attacked with a dangerous illness and brought to the very borders of life and death. When the Druids saw him in a dying state, they began with great bitterness to upbraid his parents, and to extol their own gods as more powerful than the God of the Christians, and thus to despise God as though He were weaker than their gods.

When all this was told to the blessed man [Saint Columba],

he burned with zeal for God, and proceeded with some of his companions to the house of the friendly peasant, where he found the afflicted parents celebrating the obsequies of their child, who was newly dead. The saint, on seeing their bitter grief, strove to console them with words of comfort, and exhorted them not to doubt in any way the omnipotence of God. He then inquired, saying, 'In what chamber is the dead body of your son lying?' And being conducted by the bereaved father under the sad roof, he left the whole crowd of persons who accompanied him outside, and immediately entered by himself into the house of mourning, where, falling on his knees, he prayed to Christ our Lord, having his face bedewed with copious tears. Then rising from his kneeling posture, he turned his eyes towards the deceased and said, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, arise, and stand upon thy feet.'

At the sound of this glorious word from the saint, the soul returned to the body, and the person that was dead opened his eyes and revived. The apostolic man then taking him by the hand raised him up, and placing him in a standing position, led him forth with him from the house, and restored him to his parents. Upon this the cries of the applauding multitude broke forth, sorrow was turned into joy, and the God of the Christians glorified.

## **SECOND STORY**

### **How an Aquatic Monster was Driven Off by Virtue of the Blessed Man's Prayer**

On another occasion also, when the blessed man [Saint Columba] was living for some days in the province of the Picts, he was obliged to cross the river Nesa the Ness; and when he reached the bank of the river, he saw some of the inhabitants burying an unfortunate man, who,

according to the account of those who were burying him, was a short time before seized, as he was swimming, and bitten most severely by a monster that lived in the water; his wretched body was, though too late, taken out with a hook, by those who came to his assistance in a boat.

The blessed man [Saint Columba], on hearing this, was so far from being dismayed, that he directed one of his companions to swim over and row across the coble [a flat-bottomed boat with oars] that was moored at the farther bank. And Lugne Mocumin hearing the command of the excellent man, obeyed without the least delay, taking off all his clothes, except his tunic, and leaping into the water. But the monster, which, so far from being satiated, was only roused for more prey, was lying at the bottom of the stream, and when it felt the water disturbed above by the man swimming, suddenly rushed out, and, giving an awful roar, darted after him, with its mouth wide open, as the man swam in the middle of the stream.

Then the blessed man [Saint Columba], observing this, raised his holy hand, while all the rest, brethren as well as strangers, were stupefied with terror, and, invoking the name of God, formed the saving sign of the cross in the air, and commanded the ferocious monster, saying, 'Thou shalt go no further, nor touch the man; go back with all speed.' Then at the voice of the saint, the monster was terrified, and fled more quickly than if it had been pulled back with ropes, though it had just got so near to Lugne, as he swam, that there was not more than the length of a spear-staff between the man and the beast.

Then the brethren seeing that the monster had gone back, and that their comrade Lugne returned to them in the boat safe and sound, were struck with admiration, and gave glory to God in the blessed man. And even the barbarous heathens, who were present, were forced by the greatness of this miracle, which they themselves had seen, to magnify the God of the Christians.

The above stories are available: [HERE](#)

## END OF STORIES

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# The Prophet Elisha Prefigures Saint Columba: Three Parallels

## PARALLEL-1

**Each saint resurrected a deceased boy. He did so for a righteous family.**

### **1-A) The Prophet Elisha resurrected the son of the Shunammite woman.**

The Shunammite woman was righteous. She believed in Elisha, and she assisted him.

Later her son died. He was a young boy or teenager. In great distress, the woman traveled to Mount Carmel. There she begged Elisha for help.

In response, Elisha visited her in Shunem. He entered her son's room. Thru prayer, Elisha brought the boy back to life.

The above story is found in:

Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings / Chapter 4 / Verses 8-37

Douay-Rheims (4<sup>th</sup> Kings): [HERE](#)

### **1-B) Saint Columba resurrected the boy in a family of newly baptized Christians.**

In a Druid part of Scotland, Saint Columba baptized an entire family.

It included a man, his wife, and children. The family members were righteous, and they were devoted to the Church. Soon afterwards, one of them died. He was a young boy or teenager.

The Druid neighbors viewed his death as a punishment. The idolators mocked the family.

Their ridicule filled Columba with zeal. He visited the family. Thru prayer in Jesus' name, Saint Columba brought the boy back to life.

This event made an enormous impact on the community. Pagans throughout the area were amazed at Christ's power, and they were filled with joy.

### **First Parallel – Two Common Features**

- 1) Each saint -- Elisha and Columba -- resurrected a boy who had recently died.
- 2) Each saint did so for a God-fearing and righteous family.

## PARALLEL-2

**Near a river, each saint rescued his student. He did so miraculously.**

### **2-A) The Prophet Elisha retrieved his student's axe head from the Jordan River.**

At the Jordan River, Elisha commanded his followers to build a log cabin. In obedience, one of his students borrowed an axe.

He began to work. As the student chopped wood with the axe, the metal head broke off. It flew into the river.

This event threw him into a crisis. The young student had no axe, and he could not participate in the work.

Even worse, the student was in debt to the man who had loaned him the axe. He was distressed.

Elisha now intervened to rescue him. Miraculously, Elisha caused the axe head to float to the surface.

The above story is found in:

Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings / Chapter 6 / Verses 1-7

Douay-Rheims (4<sup>th</sup> Kings): [HERE](#)

## **2-B) Saint Columba saved his student Lugne from a huge reptile in the River Ness.**

Columba and his students arrived at the Ness River. This river begins at the loch and flows north.

Columba ordered Brother Lugne to swim across the river and to fetch a rowboat on the opposite shore.

His student obeyed instantly. Lugne jumped into the river, and he swam toward the opposite side. As he reached deep water, an aquatic monster (plesiosaur) approached.

At that point, a miracle occurred. Saint Columba made the sign of the Cross, and he commanded the plesiosaur to leave his student alone.

It obeyed instantly. The plesiosaur turned around, and it fled in terror from Brother Lugne.

Shortly thereafter, Lugne reached the cobble. He rowed it to the side where Columba was waiting.

### **Second Parallel – 5 Common Features**

- 1) Both the Prophet Elisha and Saint Columba performed their miracles alongside rivers. (The Jordan River / River Ness)
- 2) Both Elisha and Columba ordered their students to perform tasks near the river (Chop wood near river / Swim across river).
- 3) In both cases, the students obeyed their masters instantly.



- 4) In both cases, the students suffered misfortunes (Loss of axe head / Plesiosaur attack).
- 5) From the riverside, both the Prophet Elisha and Saint Columba performed miracles to save their students.

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## PARALLEL-3

**Each saint was bald. Either totally or partly.**

### 1) The Prophet Elisha

As Elisha passed by the city of Bethel, a large group of teenagers and young men confronted him. They mocked him for his bald head.

The story is found in:

Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings / Chapter 2 / Verses 23-25  
Douay-Rheims (4th Kings): [HERE](#)

In short, Elisha was totally bald.

### 2) Saint Columba

In the Middle Ages, Catholic monks practiced **tonsure**. That is, they shaved their heads.

They did so in various ways. There were three forms of medieval Catholic tonsure. They were:

- Eastern
- Roman
- Celtic

Saint Columba spent his life in Ireland and Scotland. Thus, he practiced ***Celtic Tonsure***.

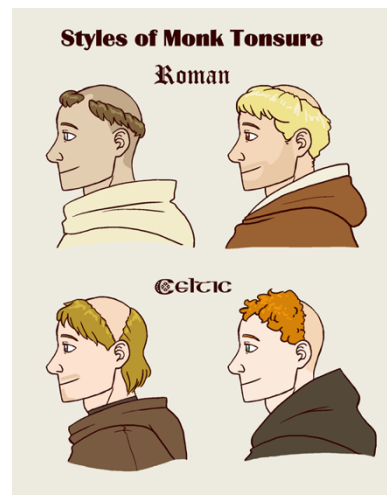
Today, there is scholarly debate about this style. Many experts hold that an Irish monk shaved the front of his head.

However, some scholars claim that the Celtic tonsure was a D-shaped cut over the middle of the head.

### Celtic Tonsure: Three Possibilities



**Bald in front**



**Bottom Row: Two possibilities.  
Both concern the mid-section of  
scalp.**

You can learn more about Catholic tonsure: [HERE](#)

In summary, both the Prophet Elisha and Saint Columba were bald.

## CONCLUSION:

**The Prophet Elisha prefigures Saint Columba of Iona.**

**Parallel-1)** Each saint resurrected a deceased boy. He did so for a righteous family.

**Parallel-2)** Near a river, each saint rescued his student. He did so miraculously.

**Parallel-3)** Each saint was bald. Either totally or partly.



**Above: The Jordan River near Jericho. Here the Prophet Elisha caused the axe head to float. (Near site of Our Lord's baptism).**

**Below: The River Ness in northern Scotland. Here Saint Columba saved his student from a plesiosaur.**

