

Saint Columba of Iona: Basic Facts

Born: 521 AD in Northern Ireland.

Died: 597 AD on Iona.

Iona is an island off the west coast of Scotland. It was the site of Columba's monastery.

Biographical Summary

- 1) Columba spent the first part of his life in Ireland.
- 2) Columba was originally a student of Finnian of Movilla, a missionary in Northern Ireland.
- 3) Later, Columba became a student of Finnian of Clonard.
- 4) Finnian of Clonard was a bishop and abbot. After Saint Patrick, he is probably the 2nd most important saint in Irish history.
- 5) Finnian was based in Clonard Abbey. This was a monastic school in eastern Ireland.
- 6) Saint Finnian's holiest students are known as the Twelve Apostles of Ireland.
Columba was one of them. Columba followed Finnian until Finnian's death (549 AD).

- 7) During his years with Finnian, Columba helped to found churches and monasteries throughout Ireland.
- 8) Around the year 560, Columba got into a conflict with his first teacher, Finnian of Movilla. This conflict concerned a copy of the Psalms.
- 9) Working long hours by night, Columba copied down Finnian's Book of Psalms. He intended to make multiple copies, and to distribute them to monasteries throughout Ireland.
- 10) However, when Finnian of Movilla learned of Columba's plans, he refused permission. He claimed that all copies belonged to him.
- 11) Columba had copied the Psalms by hand. He spent long hours doing so. He insisted that his work – i.e., the copy -- belonged to him.
- 12) According to some traditions, local kings got involved in the conflict between Columba and Finnian.
The result was the "Battle of the Book" (ca. 560 A.D.). In the battle, there were around 3000 killed or wounded.
- 13) After the battle (563 A.D.), Columba moved permanently to Scotland. He established his monastery on the island of Iona.
- 14) For the remainder of his life, Columba evangelized in the Kingdom of the Picts. Over 35 years, he brought this kingdom into the Catholic Church.

NOTE: The Kingdom of the Picts comprised the northern half of Scotland.

- 15) In Scotland, Columba performed countless miracles. They made a huge impression on the Picts.
- 16) Columba established monasteries and churches throughout northern Scotland, and in the Hebrides.
- 17) At his monastery on Iona, Columba taught the Holy Scriptures. He was a brilliant expositor of these Scriptures. Students came from all over Europe to hear him.

Learn about Saint Columba: [HERE](#)

A painting of Columba: [HERE](#)

Below: Location of Iona

