

## **Prayer Service**

### **Celebrating the 1,400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Columban**

#### **1. Opening Song or Music:**

#### **2. Welcome**

You are very welcome to our celebration to mark the 1,400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Columban. We are marking this occasion by reflecting on and celebrating the life of this great Irish monk and missionary. We are here to celebrate 1,400 years of a living faith.

#### **Opening Prayer:**

Blessed are you Lord God of all creation

Blessed are you Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life

Blessed are you Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life

Blessed are you, O Holy Trinity

Blessed are you in St Columban, pilgrim, monk and missionary

Blessed be this gathering as we now come into your Divine Presence to celebrate in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

#### **3. Presenting the life of St Columbanus**

Columbanus, which means 'Little Dove' comes from the Latin name Columba, which was a common name in Ireland during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Columbanus was 25 years younger than Columcille who founded a monastery in Iona, Scotland. Columbanus also known today, as Columban or Columbán became the founder of the great monasteries of Luxeuil in France and Bobbio in Italy.

According to tradition, he was born at the foot of Mount Leinster on the Carlow, Wexford border around the year 540. As a young man he went first to the monastery at Cleenish on Lough Erne and became a monk under the Abbot St. Sinell, He then went to the monastery in Bangor, Co Down under the Abbot Comgall. After many yeas in Bangor, he felt called to a more ascetic life and left Ireland, with a group of twelve disciples, never to return and became what is called a *peregrinus*, a pilgrim for Christ.

He settled first in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains in a place called Annegray, in France, where he established his first monastery. Here he embarked on a spiritual mission. Because of his leadership, ascetic living, knowledge and fascinating personality, many young men from different social backgrounds joined the monastery. Soon Columbanus was obliged to look to the old Roman nearby town of Luxeuil to establish a second monastery and later the hamlet of Fontaine for a third. For over twenty years he lived in the region, where he exercised a tremendous influence on the church and on the politics of the day. He eventually fell foul of members of the Merogivian kingdom of the Franks, especially Queen Brunhild and her grandson King Theuderic II and the local

Frankish bishops. This led to his expulsion, together with the Irish monks from the Frankish Kingdom. The King's men escorted him to the estuary of the Loire River to be sent back to Ireland. However, the captain of the ship refused to let Columban and his monks on board, so he returned back into Central Europe through another route.

When he got to the banks of Lake Constance, in Switzerland he settled there for a while. Having left Gall, his closest companion behind, he set his eyes south towards the Alps. Gall went on to found the modern day city of St Gallen, in Switzerland. Columban crossed the Alps into the Kingdom of the Lombards. Now, more than 70 years of age, he arrived in Bobbio, south of Milan in Northern Italy and set about establishing a new monastery on land he was given by the Lombard King, Agilulf. It was to become one of the most influential monastic centres of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Columban died on 23 November 615, in Bobbio. According to tradition, he died in the cave, known as Grotto San Michelle, where he came frequently to pray and to spend time in solitude. Today, his tomb in Bobbio is a place of pilgrimage and gathering for the many people who follow in his footsteps.

We might ask ourselves 'why did Columban make such an impact on the Church and the social landscape of the time?' He was first of all a committed believer and was totally and utterly convinced of the urgency to preach the Gospel. He brought an energy, enthusiasm and freshness to living the Gospel. He was so convincing that others felt called to join him. He defended the right of every person to his or her own good name. Thus, he introduced private confession where the penitent celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation as a personal encounter with Jesus rather than a public confession and lengthy period of penance for his or her sins. He strove vigorously for unity, understanding and dialogue both in the Church and in civil society. It was no wonder that the late Robert Schumann, one of the founders of the European Union said of Columban in 1950 that '*St. Columban is the patron of all those who now seek to build a united Europe.*' Finally, his entire outlook on life was based on the historical fact of the Resurrection of Jesus and that He is the Risen Lord. Hence, the importance that Columban gave to the feast of Easter around which the liturgical year is centred and upon which our entire life of prayer is grounded.

#### **4. Readings from St. Columbanus** *(two readers alternating)*

##### **Reader A**

Love yourself rightly, love yourself enough to choose your own happiness in choosing God. *(Sermon 3)*

##### **Reader B**

If you remove freedom, you take away dignity. *(Sermon 4)*

##### **Reader A**

Lord, grant me, I pray you, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, my God, that charity does not fail, so that my lamp may be always lighted,

never extinguished, and may burn for me and give light to others.  
(Sermon 12)

**Reader B**

It is not by words, but by faith that God is known ... High is the heaven, broad the earth, deep the sea and long the ages; but higher and broader and deeper and longer is his knowledge. For he has been adorned by nature, he who created it from nothing. (Sermon 1)

**Reader A**

How blessed, how happy are those servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find watching! Blessed watch, in which they watch for God the Creator of the universe. (Sermon 2, 2)

**Reader B**

Seek the supreme wisdom, not by verbal debate, but by the perfection of a good life (Sermon 1, 5)

**Reader A**

Be submissive to good, unbending to evil, gentle in generosity, untiring in love, just in all things. (Letter to a young disciple)

**Reader B**

Allow Christ to paint his image in you. (Sermon XI)

**5. Song or Music** (choose an appropriate song or piece of music)

**6. What does St. Columban say to us today** (this can be a shared reflection or given by one of the participants)

While Columban came from a different era, he stands forth as one of the truly great Christians of his day. His writings and way of life reflect no doubt the culture and monastic tradition of his day. However, he has left us a roadmap to follow. He shows us how to make a clear and irrevocable decision to follow Christ. Nothing stops him or separates him from following Christ. He does not compromise or water down the Gospel message. He is true to the Word of God and he does not shrink from challenging the pope, bishops and kings to be faithful to their calling. His focus is on the Kingdom of God and its fulfilment and he sees our life on earth as a pilgrim journey, so we are not to allow ourselves be paralyzed by the anxieties and problems of daily life but to look beyond them.

Columban shows us that what binds us together is love, expressed in a deep and profound care for one another and for God's creation. There is no life outside the love of God and the love for another and for the natural world, a love that is outward looking and expressed in care for the other.

**7. Psalm** (an appropriate psalm is sung or recited)

**8. Scripture Reading**

Matthew 5:13-16

**9. Pray together: The deer's Cry**

(this poem can be either sung or recited by all)

I arise today through the strength of heaven  
Light of sun, radiance of moon  
Splendor of fire, speed of lightning  
Swiftiness of wind, depth of the sea  
Stability of earth, firmness of rock

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me  
God's eye to look before me  
God's wisdom to guide me  
God's way to lie before me  
God's shield to protect me

From all who shall wish me ill  
Afar and a-near  
Alone and in a multitude  
Against every cruel, merciless power  
That may oppose my body and soul

Christ with me,  
Christ before me  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ to shield me  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me  
I arise today

## 10. Scripture Reading

Who am I and what am I called to be?

Inspired by the life and writings of St. Columban, we are invited to sit quietly for a short while and stay with the question. We may identify with one of the following callings:

- **Pilgrim.** Allow yourself to be changed as you journey along the road of life. To be open to change and not resist it. To allow God to speak through you, to allow a friend to guide you. To seek out a 'soul friend'. To see and protect the beauty of nature and life around you. To be always thankful.
- **Missionary.** To embrace the Spirit calling you to look beyond yourself and to think of the other. To be awake to the realities of the world and ready to respond with Gospel

values. To step out of one's comfort zone and to be available to others.

- **Contemplative in the countryside, town and city.** To see the world around you through the eyes of faith. Not to get caught up in the trivial and fleeting things of everyday life. To keep a focus on what matters. To discern the will of God in the events of every day both locally and globally. To be proactive in your faith commitment and to celebrate it with thanksgiving. Never give up on prayer.

11. **Gesture:** You are invited to come forward and light your candle from the Pascal Candle and choose the calling that best describes your commitment to follow Christ at this time. *(each participant places his or her lighted candle together with card that states one of the three callings in the designated place.)*

## 12. Litany of St. Columban

Lord have mercy. **R/.** Christ have mercy

St. Columban. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, pilgrim and wanderer for Christ **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, monk and missionary. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, abbot and brother. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, contemplative and prophetic. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, defender of truth and freedom. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, dove of peace. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, friend of nature. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, lover of all creatures. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, protector of the environment. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, healer of the sick. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, courageous and fearless. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, forgiving and rich in mercy. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, voice for justice, peace & integrity. **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, true to the Word of God **R/.** Pray for us

St. Columban, intercede to God for us. **R/.** Pray for us

Oh Lord hear our prayer **R/.** And grant us your salvation

For the pilgrim Church in every land

**R/.** May it be filled, guided and governed by your Holy Spirit.

For our Holy Father Pope Francis

**R/.** Continue to bestow on him your wisdom to guide him in his service of leading, inspiring, challenging and unifying the Church.

For the religious leaders of the world

**R/.** Come with your unfailing help and give them your strength in their ministry.

For missionaries throughout the world

**R/.** Bless their work that all people may know the light of Christ.

For the sick and those who have asked for our prayers  
**R/**. Comfort and strengthen them and keep us attentive to their needs.

For the imprisoned, those deprived of their freedom and those  
undergoing persecution  
**R/**. Give them strength of mind and body and fill them with your hope.

For those committed to interreligious dialogue, justice and peace **R/**.  
Give them courage to be prophetic and authentic witnesses to the  
Gospel.

For all who are involved in protecting God's creation  
**R/**. May they be successful in their work.

For the intentions of our families and friends throughout the world, and  
those who watch out and care for us  
**R/**. Keep them in your loving care and bless them with good health.

For lay and religious vocations  
**R/**. Inspire many young men and women to answer the call of the Gospel

For ourselves and those with whom we presently live  
**R/**. May your presence be upon us that we may live in love.

For our deceased family members, and all those who have been close to  
us during their lives  
**R/**. May they rest in peace and enjoy the company of the angels, saints  
and martyrs in the Kingdom of heaven.

### **13. Final Prayer: Prayer of Saint Columban**

Lord, kindle our lamps, Saviour most dear to us,  
that we may always shine in your presence  
and always receive light from you, the Light Perpetual,  
so that our own personal darkness may be overcome,  
and the world's darkness driven from us.

Amen.

*(St. Columban, Sermon XII)*