

13th June 2021

Colm Cille

**“Saint Columba, dear friend we claim,
In father, Son and Spirit’s Name,
Through the Trinity, through the Three,
Our help and our companion be.”**

A Prayer of Invocation, Carmichael’s ‘Carmina Gadelica’ (1900)

This week has marked the 1500th anniversary of the birth Saint Columba. Born in Ireland in 521, *Colm Cille* was a descendent of a princely family. We’re told he left his native Donegal as a young man and crossed the sea to the west coast of Scotland. Perhaps he had the restless wanderlust of the Celts in his blood, or maybe the legend of his wish to convert more souls to Christianity than he’d seen slaughtered in a local feud is actually true. One way or another, he landed on the Island of Iona, set up a community there, and took the Christian Gospel to Scotland and beyond.

On June 9th – the actual day of the anniversary – I received in the post a lovely publication from a priest friend. It’s called *A Novena to Saint Columba* and it sets out a series of themes relating to the life of the Saint to guide us in our times of prayer. The book has been produced by Fr Ross SJ Crichton, a priest of the RC Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, who bases the prayers on the deep spiritual traditions of Ireland and Scotland, as well as on writings attributed to Saint Columba himself. I’ll be using these for my own prayers over the next while, as well as reflecting on them here.

The prayer above was part of an invocation which accompanied the transfer of people and their livestock from winter shelter to summer pastures, usually around the beginning of May. It’s a blessing for a journey to a fresh start, and the hopefulness this offers. Perhaps Saint Columba used a prayer like this on his own journey from Ireland to a new beginning. Maybe the Iona monks needed this kind of prayer as they set out with the Gospel message into the wilds of Scotland.

It might be an invocation we can use now, as we seek new pastures and fresh beginnings, in whatever part of our life that’s necessary. For when *we* look to the future, we might need all the help we can get, and the blessing of Saint Columba might be a good place to start.

A prayer for today

Lord, may St Columba bless me as you blessed him, as I face new beginnings. Amen.