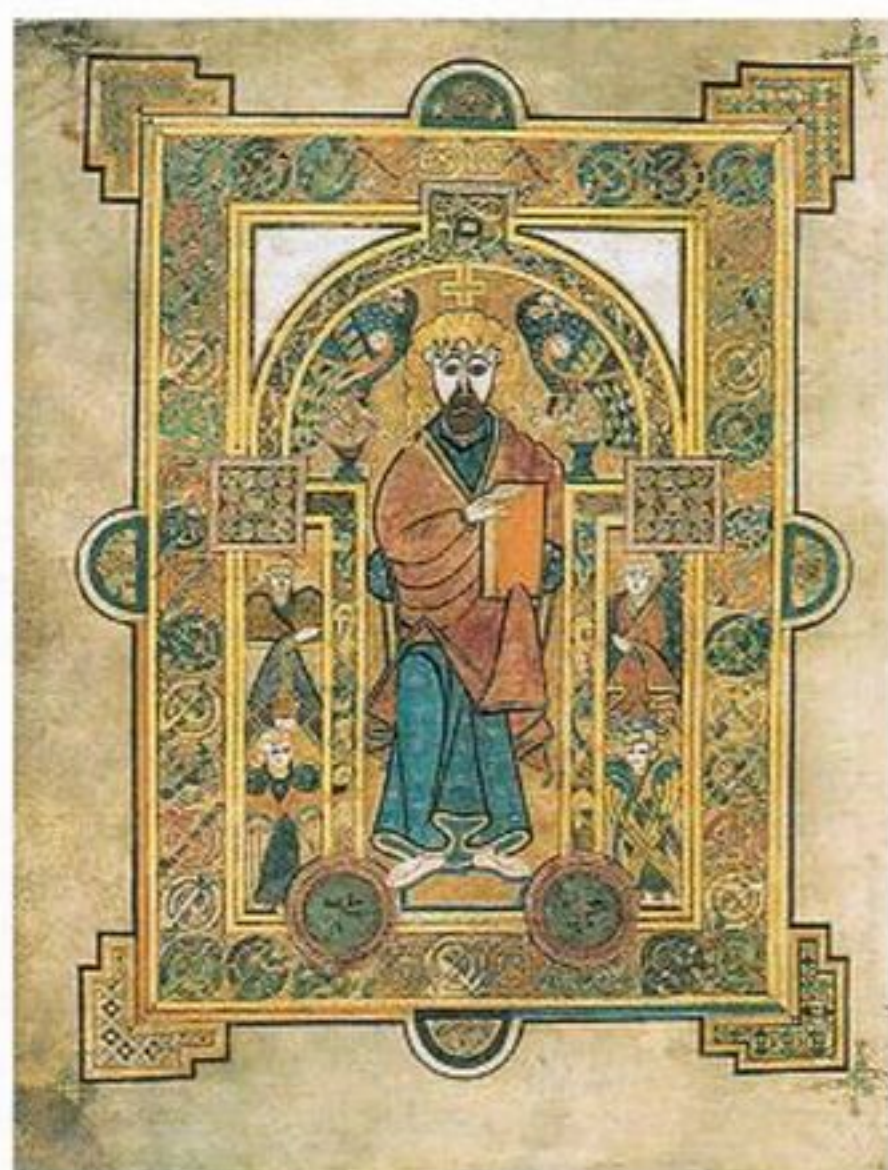


## SOLEMNITY OF ST. COLUMBA

9<sup>th</sup> June 2013

St. Mary's, Belford Road, Fort William PH33 6BT. Tel. (01397) 702174

Charity No. SC002876



### Noticeboard

Sunday Masses: Vigil Mass, Saturday, 6 p.m.  
Sunday Morning Mass 10.30 a.m.

Weekday Masses: 10.15 a.m. .

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday : 9.45 to 10 a.m.;  
4 to 4.30 p.m.;  
5.30 to 5.50 p.m.

*Tuesday is the Memorial of St. Barnabas; Thursday, the Memorial of St. Anthony of Padua.*

This is a page from the renowned Book of Kells, named after the Irish abbey where for centuries it was kept. It shows Christ holding the book of the Gospels. The Book of Kells is sometimes called "The Book of Columba". It is one of the glories of the ancient Celtic Church, and most scholars believe that it was started in Iona, then continued in Ireland because of Viking raids in western Scotland. Columba himself loved to copy the scriptures. He did so up to the day of his death in 597.

This Sunday there is a special Mass in Oban at 5 p.m. It celebrates the 1450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Columba's arrival on Iona and the foundation of his monastery. The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Mennini, and many bishops and clergy will be there as well as people from all over Scotland and Ireland. Some will continue to Iona tomorrow to further honour the patron saint of our Diocese.

There will be a farewell concert in Lochyside Catholic School on Friday, at 7 p.m. in honour of Sister Audrey and Sister Thérèse who will be returning very soon to Australia. The two sisters have spread devotion to their founder, Mary MacKillop, during their years with us. They have been for many of us good and faithful friends whom we will miss very much. They have also been worthy ambassadors of Australia and New Zealand and we will miss their warmth, humour and down-to-earth wisdom as well as their example of commitment to the religious life.

We remember our Faithful Departed with love and with faith. We pray especially for those whose anniversaries are about this time: Margaret Auty, Adam Ward, Agnes MacAlister, Allan Campbell, Charlie Campbell, Alex Kennedy, Charlie Kerr, Joseph Mulroony, Catriona MacDonald, John Cameron and Mary Brady. May their souls and the souls of all the Faithful Departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

Please keep a very special place in your prayers for the children who will make their First Holy Communion next Sunday, at the 10.30 Mass. It is our most fervent hope that this be the beginning of a deeper relationship with Christ that will endure in the years ahead.

Our sick relatives, friends and neighbours are constantly in our thoughts and prayers, especially at Mass. Would those who say the rosary before weekday Mass, please remember them especially in the coming weeks.

Fr. Joseph Kasule should be with us in a few weeks time. Fr. MacKinnon will be taking his annual break. Reading a good book in a sunlit garden does sound very attractive!

The next special collection is not until July, so you have a wee break.

The answers to the recent quiz on the Acts of the Apostles will be in next week's bulletin. This week, for obvious reasons, we have a very short history of the Diocese.



## A Very Short History of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles

Our origins are imprinted on our landscape, in names such as Kilkerran in Campbeltown, Kildonnan on Eigg, and Kilmory in Arisaig. The most evocative name of all is Iona, where Columba founded his monastery in 563. It was from Ireland that he came, for the sea was always our highway. His people had preceded him, settling in Dalriada and making our diocese the eldest daughter of the Irish Church. He came as an exile; his princely pride would be tempered by the monastic life. He came as a "pilgrim of Christ," and as such would journey far into the land of the Northern Picts.

The Irish or Celtic Church to which Columba belonged was part of the rich mosaic of early Latin Christianity. It had its distinctive features: the primacy of the monastic life, the Celtic tonsure, its own date of Easter, episcopal ordination by a single bishop rather than by three, but Latin was its sacred language, lovingly written by Columba as he copied the Scriptures, even on the day of his death in 597.

Columba's successors continued the mission to the Picts. His was not the only inspiration. There were other saints whose foundations evangelised our land. For example, Donnan's monastery on Eigg rivalled Iona in size and in influence. After his mission on Skye, St. Maolrubha founded Applecross and became the apostle of the north-west of Scotland. But Iona would take the lead, becoming a centre of the learning so valued by Celtic Catholicism, a sanctuary for penitents, a place for the burial of kings, and the focal point for Christianity in Northern Britain.

Eventually, Iona's influence would decline and that for two reasons. One was the movement of power to the east as the Kingdom of Scotland began to take shape. The other was the Viking attacks of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. These devastated the Christian communities of the Hebrides. Iona itself was sacked in 806. These invasions helped isolate the Scottish Church from the rest of Europe, the Culdee clergy preserving much of its Celtic character. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Queen Margaret and her successors drew Scotland back into mainstream Catholicism, itself undergoing a great renewal. Within a century the foundations of our present diocese would appear. The Diocese of Argyll was established with Lismore as its episcopal seat. The Diocese of the Isles, centred on Iona, had a rather chequered beginning. From about 1079, it recognised the metropolitan authority of York. In 1153, Rome made it subject to Trondheim in Norway. It was only in 1472 that the Isles joined the other Dioceses of Scotland and that as a suffragan of St. Andrew's.

The role of Clan Donald should not be forgotten in the medieval period. As well as being great patrons of Gaelic culture, its chiefs supported the Church, the Cistercian Abbey of Saddell in Kintyre and the Benedictine Abbey on Iona being examples of their patronage. Evidence of close links with Europe is found, to give just one example, in the great Gaelic 13<sup>th</sup> century warrior-bard, Muireach Albanach, who wearily composed this verse on his return from the crusades and from pilgrimage to Rome: "A rìgh, naoimh Pheadar is Phol, is fada an Ròimh bho ceann Loch Long!"

The Stewart kings resented the MacDonald autonomy, ending the Lordship of the Isles in 1493. It was Stewart patronage that advanced the career of James Hamilton. He was appointed Bishop of Argyll in 1553 and would be the last Bishop of that diocese. His departure was less than heroic, as he submitted to the Reformation Parliament of 1560. The See of the Isles was vacant in 1560, Alexander Gordon having been translated to Galloway. He, too, would go over to the Protestant Reform.

If heroism was absent in such leaders, it certainly would not be among the people of the Highlands and Islands in the centuries that followed. The old Gaelic priesthood died out and the people clung to at least the memory of the Faith. Our debt to the Irish missionaries of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century is incalculable: men like the Franciscan Cornelius Ward, the Vincentian Dermott Duggan, and the Dominican George Fanning. Native clergy would re-appear, especially after the foundation of the seminary on Loch Morar in 1714. By this time a Catholic bishop once again served in Scotland: Thomas Nicholson, appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1694. During his visitation of the Highlands and Islands in 1700 he confirmed over 3000 of the Faithful!

The establishment of a Highland Vicariate in 1731 ensured a succession of Gaelic-speaking bishops. There were stormy times ahead, the aftermath of Culloden among them. The Highland seminary moved from place to place, providing students for the colleges abroad. Those returning from Paris were sometimes accused of Jansenism, a useless controversy when so many priests in the Highlands and Islands endured a poverty unknown among the Lowland clergy. The Clearances, followed by the Potato Famine of 1848, accelerated the rate of emigration, planting Gaelic Catholicism in distant lands. At home, the endurance of the Faithful was at last rewarded when in 1878 the two ancient dioceses were restored as the one Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. The Rt. Rev. Joseph Toal is its tenth bishop.