

Reflection Wednesday Week 10 St Columba 2021

St Columba (521? - 597) (Gaelic Colm Cille) was born in Gartan, County Donegal, of royal lineage. He studied under Finnian of Moville and Finnian of Clonard. He founded monasteries at Derry, Durrow, and possibly Kells, before leaving Ireland as a missionary, "*an exile for Christ.*" His greatest foundation was Iona, from where he converted much of western Scotland, and his followers took the Gospel as far as northern England. He died at Iona in 597. He was a renowned poet and scribe as well as a spiritual guide. In Gaelic literature he appears as Ireland's most popular saint, noted for his great personal love of all creatures, both human and animal.

Some people can walk into a room and everyone turns to greet them, the room brightens up and the whole atmosphere changes; smiles appear, the conversation become more animated. There is a feeling of freedom and joy in the air. However good the analysis and explanation, it pales into insignificance to being present and experiencing the encounter. Writings about love are in their billions but they are nothing compared to the experience of Love: being loved and showing love. Many pictures of saints and holy people show them wearing a halo. It is an artist's way of showing that love and goodness emanated from the person and touched peoples' hearts and lives. Paul uses the words *brightness* and *splendour* which are far greater than any explanation or description, they are felt and experienced in a way that is both uplifting and humbling, inspiring an admiration that promotes a desire to share the experience. In Columba it was evident in "*his great personal love of all creatures, both human and animal.*" In Jesus it was found in his care and concern for people especially those in need, in his stories and his healings. We experience it particularly in the Eucharist and in his death and resurrection. The more we experience Jesus' love in scripture and in the Eucharist the more we will encounter that same love in the people we meet and in the natural flora and fauna of the world, like Columba.