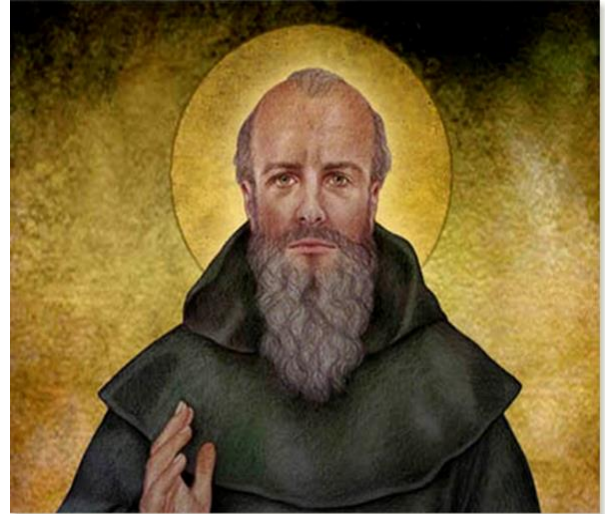
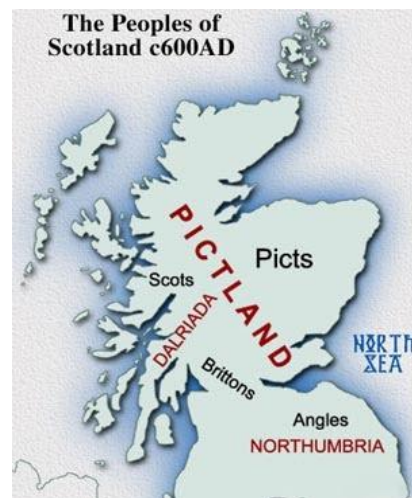


St. Columba (Colmcille)

Saint Columba (7 December 521 – 9 June 597) was an Irish abbot and missionary credited with spreading Christianity in present-day Scotland (**Caledonia** is the Latin name used by the Romans for Scotland). He founded the important abbey on **Iona**, which became a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries. He is the Patron Saint of Derry. He was highly regarded by both the Gaels of *Dál Riata* and the Picts, and is remembered today as a Christian saint and one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland.



In 563, he travelled to Scotland with twelve companions (said to include Odran of Iona) in a wicker currach covered with leather. According to legend he first landed on the Kintyre Peninsula, near Southend. However, being still in sight of his native land, he moved farther north up the west coast of Scotland. The island of Iona was made over to him by his kinsman Conall mac Comgall, King of *Dál Riata*, who perhaps had invited him to come to Scotland in the first place. However, there is a sense in which he was not leaving his native people, as the Irish Gaels had been colonizing the west coast of Scotland for the previous couple of centuries. Aside from the services he provided guiding the only center of literacy in the region, his reputation as a holy man led to his role as a diplomat among the tribes.





There are also many stories of miracles which he performed during his work to convert the Picts, the most famous being his encounter with an unidentified animal that some have equated with the Loch Ness Monster in 565. It is said that he banished a ferocious "water beast" to the depths of the River after it had killed a Pict and then tried to attack Columba's disciple (see Vita Columbae Book 2 below). He visited the pagan King Bridei, King of Fortriu, at his base in Inverness, winning the Bridei's respect, although not his conversion. He subsequently played a major role in the politics of the country. He was also very energetic in his work as a missionary, and, in addition to founding several churches in the Hebrides, he worked to turn his monastery at Iona into a school for missionaries. He was a renowned man of letters, having written several hymns and being credited with having transcribed 300 books. One of the few, if not the only, times he left Scotland was towards the end of his life, when he returned to Ireland to found the monastery at Durrow. The Clan Malcolm/Clan McCallum claims its name from Columba and was reputedly founded by the descendants of his original followers

Columba died on Iona and was buried in 597 by his monks in the abbey he created. In 794 the Vikings descended on Iona. Columba's relics were finally removed in 849 and divided between Scotland and Ireland. The parts of the relics which went to Ireland are reputed to be buried in Downpatrick, County Down, with St Patrick and St Brigid.



“High King of Heaven,
Almighty Father of us all,
as your servant Saint Columba
established a community built on love and trust,
so grant that in all humility
we may be your hands and your voices here on earth,
working to build up the community of faith
in the name of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen”

St. Columba, Pray for Us

