**St. Columban: A Pilgrim of Hope Across Ireland**

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, children will:

* Know key details about St. Columban’s journey through Ireland, including monastic sites and travel methods.
* Understand the concept of pilgrimage and connect it to the **Jubilee Year 2025** theme: *Pilgrims of Hope*.
* Reflect on how Columban trusted God in times of uncertainty and how we can do the same today.
* Appreciate Ireland's monastic heritage and geography through cross-curricular exploration.

### **Background Information for Teachers**

* **St. Columban** (also called Columbanus) was born c. 543 AD in **Myshall, Co. Carlow**.
* From a young age, he showed love for nature, prayer, and learning.
* He travelled northward through **Leinster and Ulster**, visiting monastic centres like **Clonard, Clones, and Bangor Abbey**.
* He departed Ireland from **Bangor, Co. Down** to become one of Europe’s greatest missionaries.
* His life models the idea of being a **Pilgrim of Hope** — journeying in faith, guided by God’s call.

### **1. Introduction**

**Storytelling – "The Boy Who Walked with Hope"** Tell this as a narrative:

"In the shadow of Mount Leinster, young Columban packed his simple satchel. He would walk for many days, visiting holy places, learning from wise monks. But he wasn’t just walking — he was on a journey with God. He was a *Pilgrim of Hope*, trusting that God would lead him — even if the road was long..."

**Class discussion:**

* What is a pilgrim?
* Why do people go on pilgrimage?
* Have you ever walked somewhere special with a purpose (e.g., Knock, Croagh Patrick)?

**2. Geography/History Integration**

**Map Activity: “Tracing Columban’s Journey”**

* Show Ireland on the whiteboard or paper maps.
* Mark **Myshall**, **Clonard**, **Clones**, and **Bangor**.
* Ask: *How do you think Columban travelled?* (on foot, possibly by donkey, boat at Bangor)
* Discuss what the landscape of 6th-century Ireland might have been like.

**Pair Work:** Children create a **simple illustrated map** showing Columban’s route, adding symbols for hills, rivers, monasteries, and prayer.

**English / Creative Writing Task**

**Prompt:** “Write a diary entry as young Columban as he travels north from Carlow to the various places he visits.

**Encourage sensory and emotional language:**

* What does he see and hear?
* How does he feel — excited, afraid, hopeful?
* Include references to prayer and God’s call.

### **5. Art Extension**

**Create a stained-glass-style drawing or collage:** *“St. Columban: Pilgrim of Hope”* Include:

* A scroll or book
* A walking staff
* Irish hills/monasteries
* Crosses or sacred symbols

Or: Build a simple **monastic round tower** or **beehive cell** from paper/card.

**6. Reflection & Prayer**

**Discussion prompts:**

* What does it mean to be a *Pilgrim of Hope*?
* Can we still follow God’s call today?
* Have you ever made a brave choice like Columban?

**Closing Prayer:**

*“Lord, just like St. Columban, help us to walk with courage, trust, and hope. May we be your pilgrims — in our words, our actions, and our hearts. Amen.”*

**Optional: Light a candle and allow silent reflection.**

## **Cross-Curricular Integration Chart**

| **Subject** | **Integration Activity** |
| --- | --- |
| **Religious Education** | Story of St. Columban’s calling, pilgrimage, and response to God |
| **Geography** | Map Columban’s journey across Ireland; explore terrain and monastic sites |
| **History** | Learn about life in 6th-century Ireland; early Christian monasticism |
| **English** | Diary entry; personal reflection writing; letter as a pilgrim |
| **Drama** | Role-play, conscience alley, hot-seating as Columban or his mother |
| **Visual Arts** | Design stained glass; make a map; create a model monastic building |
| **SPHE** | Discuss vocation, decision-making, and courage; being hopeful in challenges |
| **Music (Optional)** | Listen to simple Gregorian chant or Irish spiritual music and reflect on monastic life |

## **Optional Homework / Extension**

* **Research:** Where did Columban go after leaving Ireland? (France, Italy, Switzerland)
* **Postcard Task:** Write a postcard home from **Bangor**, just before sailing for Europe.
* **Class Display:** “We Are Pilgrims of Hope” – maps, prayers, art, and diary entries.

## **Assessment Methods**

* Participation in oral discussion and drama
* Quality of writing (diary entries, letters)
* Observation during map activity and group tasks
* Artwork and creativity in projects
* Reflective journaling or exit ticket:  
   *“What does being a Pilgrim of Hope mean to me?”*