**Young Columban of Carlow: Listening to God’s Call**

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, children will:

* Learn about the early life of **St. Columban**, focusing on his upbringing in **Co. Carlow**.
* Explore the idea of **vocation** and how saints like Columban responded to God's call.
* Reflect on how **we can listen to God’s voice** in our own lives.
* Appreciate the **historical and geographical** context of 6th-century Ireland.
* Recognise how **personal choices** (courage, faith, obedience) shape identity and mission.

## **Background for Teacher**

St. Columban (or Columbanus) was born c. 543 AD, likely in **Myshall or Garryhundon, Co. Carlow**. Raised in a deeply Christian culture, he studied under monks—possibly from **Bangor** or **Clonard**—and developed a love for **Scripture, learning, nature**, and **prayer**. As a young man, he felt **God’s call to religious life**, despite opposition from his mother. He went on to become one of **Ireland’s greatest missionaries**, founding monasteries across Europe.

## **Cross-Curricular Integration**

| **Subject** | **Integration Description** |
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| **History** | Explore 6th-century Ireland and early Christian monasticism. Investigate local heritage – Columban’s links to Carlow and nearby monasteries. |
| **Geography** | Locate **Myshall**, **Mount Leinster**, and major **monastic centres** on a map. Discuss landscape of early medieval Ireland. |
| **SPHE** | Discuss themes of **calling, family relationships, courage**, and **decision-making**. Link to identity and well-being. |
| **English** | Create **diary entries**, **letters**, or **retellings** from Columban’s perspective. Explore vocabulary of emotion and place. |
| **Drama** | Role-play scenes (e.g., Columban and his mother), use **hot-seating** and **conscience alley** to explore feelings and choices. |
| **Visual Arts** | Create artwork depicting **Columban's early life** (stained-glass, monastic cells, Celtic scenes). |
| **Music** *(optional)* | Listen and respond to **Gregorian chant** or **Celtic hymns** to evoke monastic atmosphere. |

## **Lesson Structure**

### **1. Introduction – Story of Young Columban**

Begin with storytelling:

“In the shadow of **Mount Leinster**, 1,400 years ago, lived a clever and curious boy named Columban. He loved birds, books, and the beauty of God's world—but he also felt a stirring deep within… a call from God…”

Discuss:

* His youth in **Myshall**, his deep faith, love for learning.
* Tension between his mother’s concerns and his calling.

### **2. Geography & History Link**

* Show a map of **Ireland**; locate **Myshall**, **Mount Leinster**, **Bangor Abbey**, **Clonard**, and other early monasteries.
* Ask: *What might Carlow have looked like in Columban’s time?*
* Compare life in 6th-century Ireland with children’s lives today.

### **3. Creative Writing – English Link**

### Prompt:

“Write a diary entry as young Columban the night before he leaves home.”

Encourage the use of:

* Sensory language: *What can he hear, see, feel?*
* Emotional vocabulary: *Hope, fear, faith, sorrow, excitement.*

### **4. Drama Activity**

Choose one:

* **Role Play**: A conversation between **Columban and his mother**, debating his choice.
* **Conscience Alley**: Two lines of classmates—one urges him to stay, the other to follow God’s call.

**Optional extension**: Use **hot-seating** – one student becomes Columban; classmates ask questions about his thoughts and feelings.

### **5. Visual Arts Activity (Homework or Class Extension)**

Art Tasks (choose one):

* Design a **stained-glass window** showing young Columban with:  
  + A **Celtic cross**, **scroll**, **book**, and **Carlow landscape**.
* Create a **miniature monastic beehive hut or round tower** from paper or recycled materials.

### **6. Reflection & Prayer**

Discuss:

* *What does it mean to follow God’s call?*
* *Have you ever had to make a brave but good decision?*

**Closing Prayer**:

*“Lord, like St. Columban, help us to be brave, faithful, and open to your voice. May we follow your call with joy and courage. Amen.”*

**Optional**: Light a candle and have 30 seconds of silent prayer or reflection.

## **Optional Extensions / Homework**

* **Research**: Where did Columban go after Ireland? (*France, Italy, Switzerland*).
* **Creative**: Write a **postcard from 543 AD**, as if you're Columban writing from Myshall.
* **Art/Project**: Create a **mini-book** titled *“The Boy from Carlow Who Followed God”*.

## **Assessment Methods**

* Oral questioning and class discussion
* Observation of engagement in drama and writing tasks
* Review of diary entries and art activities
* Reflective journaling or end-of-lesson quiz