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Saint Columbanus and Holiness in Community

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BACKGROUND

- **6th Century:** During the 6th century, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire and was expanding to "barbarian" lands, of which Ireland (Columbanus' place of birth) was one.
- **Naomh (Saint) Columbanus (b. 543):** Born in the Kingdom of Leinster in Ireland in 543, Columbanus founded multiple monasteries and wrote sermons, poems, and *The Rule of St. Columbanus* to assist in the spiritual development and order of his monks.
- **Holiness:** To be separated, or set apart, from the world and its sinfulness - including the worldliness and sinfulness inside oneself. Discipline, piety, and rightly-ordered relationships are all part of Holiness.
- **Celtic Monasticism:** Developing independently from but inspired by the Desert Fathers, Celtic Monasticism tended to be cenobitic (communal) and had a special emphasis on the monastery's function as a community center.



PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- An emphasis on structure
- Reminders to obey the abbot "unto death," similar to *The Rule of St. Benedict*
- Practice individual devotional time and communal prayer
- The sins to be rooted out are those of contention, disobedience, idle words and gossip, and "talking back" internally (as in, not working or taking instruction with a gracious spirit).
- The activities of the monastery were for the sanctification of the monk and the efficient running of the monastic institution as a community center

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

An examination of all the extant writings from Columbanus' pen, in special regards to holiness, piety, and devotion to God in the interest of healthy community life. Attention was particularly placed on his emphasis on obedience as a virtue which was both beneficial for the spiritual development of the individual monk and for the relational health of the abbey.

Purpose and Research Question

St. Columbanus focused on how to create healthy and Christ-honoring community. How did he promote personal piety, obedience, and holiness in order to achieve that?

Continue our longing after him, as though hungry still. In like manner, that we may always drink of him, the Fountain, with exceeding pleasure, drink of him unceasingly in the full eagerness of our longing after him, and be delighted with his grateful sweetness (for the Lord is sweet and pleasant), though we do eat of him and drink, yet let us ever still hunger and thirst for him."

St. Columbanus, *On Jesus Christ the Living Fountain*

FURTHER RESEARCH

- Columbanus' influence on future monasteries and abbots
- The influence of 6th century politics and popular theology on Columbanus' emphasis on Holiness
- Columbanus in comparison to other abbots of the period