Kevin of Glendalough

Born: c 498 AD

Died: 618 AD

Feast Day:
3 June

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DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Kevin's family were of noble birth. He was born in 498 AD. He was educated from the age of 7, by Saint Petroc of Cornwall and he lived with monks until he was 12. He studied for the priesthood. Following his ordination, he lived as a hermit in a cave in Glendalough. He went barefoot, wore skins, ate nettles and herbs, and spent his time in prayer. It was a lonely life.

He had a special love for birds and animals. Many stories and legends have been told and written about him. One legend is that a blackbird laid an egg in Kevin's hand when his arms were outstretched in prayer. Kevin did not move until the baby bird hatched!

After 7 years in the cave, Kevin went to the valley. Disciples gathered around him and he became their spiritual leader. Kevin eventually moved up the glen and established his permanent monastery. The monks erected rough churches, cells and round tower and the place became one of pilgrimage.

Kevin attracted many visitors to Glendalough. Boys came to be educated. Having firmly established his community, he retired to be alone for four years, and only returned to Glendalough when the monks pleaded with him to return.

Kevin died in 618 AD of natural causes and he was canonized in 1903. In Ireland, his feast day is celebrated on June 3rd. As might be expected, the "St. Francis of Ireland" is the patron saint of blackbirds. He is also honoured as such in Dublin and Glendalough.