

Comgall- Abbot

Born: 510/520

Died: 597/602

Feast Day:

10 May



**DERRY DIOCESAN
CATECHETICAL
CENTRE**

Comgall was born in the Dal Riada area of the north-east coast of Ireland (Co Antrim) about 517. Magheramorne near Larne lays a claim to being his birth-place. Comgall's father was Setna, a Pictish warrior; his mother's name was Briga. After serving as a soldier in his early life, he was educated under Fintan of Clonenagh and also studied under Finnian of Movilla, Mobhí Cláraineach at Glasnevin, and Ciarán of Clonmacnoise.

He was ordained deacon and priest by Bishop Lugidius. He lived for a while on an island on Lough Erne, accompanied by a few friends who followed a severe form of monastic life. The regime was so austere that seven companions died of cold and hunger.

After living under a harsh rule as a hermit, Comgall founded a monastery in Bangor. He was abbot for eight thousand monks.

Life in the monasteries was severe. Food was scant and plain. Herbs, water, and bread was customary. Even milk was considered an indulgence. At Bangor only one meal was allowed, and that not until evening. Confession was in public before the community. Severe acts of penance were frequent. Silence was observed at meals and at other times also, conversation being restricted to the minimum. Fasting was frequent and prolonged.

Comgall accompanied Columba on a mission to Inverness, Scotland, and founded a monastery at Heth. There is no strong evidence that Comgall was a disciple of Columba. Comgall was a friend to future saints Cormac, Brendan, and Canice.

Comgall belonged to what is known as the Second Order of Irish Saints.

They were for the most part educated in Britain, or received their training from those who had grown up under the influence of the British Schools. They were the founders of the great Irish monastic schools, and contributed much to the spread of monasticism in the Irish Church.

Comgall died at Bangor. His figure as a monk still appears at the top of the coat of arms of Bangor town.