Finian of Clonard

Born: 470

Died: 549

Feast Day:

12 December

CC Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany
Andreas F. Borchert

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Finian was born in the small village of Myshall just southeast of Carlow town, on the slopes of Mount Leinster.

When Finian was introduced to the Christian Church, it awoke a hunger in him for learning. In response to that hunger for knowledge, he travelled to Britain and then to France to study.

In Tours, he spent time at St. Martin's Monastery. He sacrificed physical comfort to learn more about religion. He then went to Wales to perfect himself and studied at the monastery of Cadog the Wise. Finian made copies of Rome's classics and of St. Jerome's Vulgate.

After 30 years, he returned to Ireland and established a church near the river Barrow. He taught at St. Brigid's monastery.

Finian founded Clonard Abbey in County Meath.
He built a little cell and a church of clay and wattle, and entered on a life of study, mortification, and prayer.

Finian's monastery was modelled on the practices of Welsh monasteries and based on the traditions of the Desert Fathers and the study of Scripture. The rule of Clonard was known for its strictness and asceticism.

The fame of his learning and sanctity soon spread, and scholars of all ages flocked from every side to his monastic retreat. Finian's gift for teaching and his absolute dedication to the ascetic ideal inspired a whole generation.

The pupils of Finian who became the founding fathers of monasteries are described as leaving Clonard bearing a book or crozier or some other object, suggesting that working scriptorium and craft workshops were established at Clonard at an early date.

In the Office of Saint Finian, it is stated that there were no fewer than 3,000 pupils getting instruction at one time in the school in the green fields of Clonard.

The Twelve Apostles of Ireland studied under him. Ciarán of Clonmacnoise and Columcille of Iona are among the many who trained under him. They and many others took seeds of knowledge from Finian's monastery at Clonard and planted them abroad with great success.

He is patron saint of the Diocese of Meath. Finian of Clonard is known as "*The Master of the Saints of Ireland*"