

# Early Christian Ireland

# The Celts and Religion

- What did we learn from Hallstatt and La Tene?
- Burial Customs
- A belief in the afterlife
- A belief in Gods   ? Many deities
- Druids   ? doing the Gods' work on Earth.
- =*A system of religion like Christianity would not be too hard to establish in Ireland amongst the Celts*

# A Change of Life

- As the Roman Empire began to spread its power across Europe, the Celtic stronghold began to disappear and lose power.
- 400 AD -Emperor Constantine- Catholic Emperor : began to send missionaries across Europe to spread the word of God.
- Prospero Tiro (Roman Writer): His writing is the first evidence we have of Christianity in Ireland.
  - Bishop Palladius: sent to Ireland to spread Christianity. After that however there's no reference to him again.

# Saint Patrick

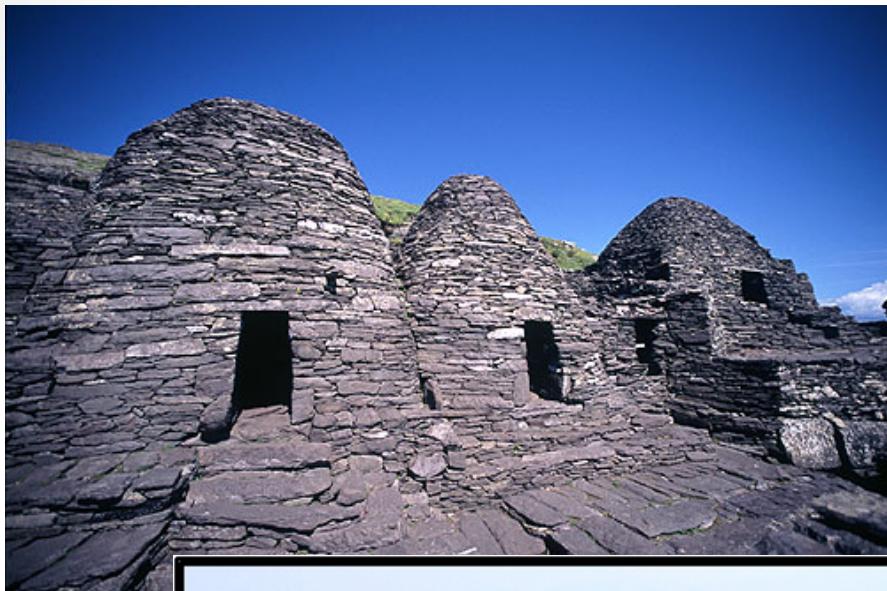
- Primary Source: *The Confession*
- From Roman Britain : Possibly Wales, born a Christian.
- 16 years old  Patrick was captured and brought to Ireland as a slave. He escaped after 6 years.
  - He then became a priest.
  - He reports to have heard the voice of God telling him to return to Ireland and spread the Word of God.
- 432AD until his death in 461AD
- St. Patrick is reported to have baptised thousands of Irish people into Christianity and ordained many clerics to spread the religion.

# The beginning of the monasteries

- After Patrick's death, religious communities were founded all over the country in remote areas.
- These communities were called monasteries.
- The monks lived here, where they would spend their lives praying and dedicating their lives to God.
- This was a way of getting closer to God.

- The monks wished to live a life isolated away from bad things, such as wealth and greed and power.
- This is why they chose to found their monasteries in remote places.
- *Naomh Éanna/St. Enda*: Started the first Irish Monastery in Inis Mór on the Arann Islands.
- *Sceilig Mhichíl (Kerry Coast)* : Very isolated, very simplistic. Very little grows here. They would get herbs from the mainland. And would keep goats to produce milk and cheese. Birds and fish were a source of meat for the monks in this monastery

- There were some big monasteries too which functioned as centres of learning. Students would go here to study:
  - Clonmacnoise (Offaly)
  - Glendalough (Wicklow)
- See page 42. of Timeline.



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# The Life of the Monk



# The Monastery

- A stone wall surrounded the monastery usually:
- **Oratory:** The place where the monks prayed
- **Refectory:** The place where the monks ate their meals
- **(Beehive) Cells:** Every monk had one where they would sleep and reflect. It was made of wood or stone. Study was also done here.
- **The Scriptorium:** the place where manuscripts were copied.
- **The Round Tower:** A belltower to call the monks to pray or to religious service. Also used as sanctuary from attack and to keep valuables safe.

# Glendalough

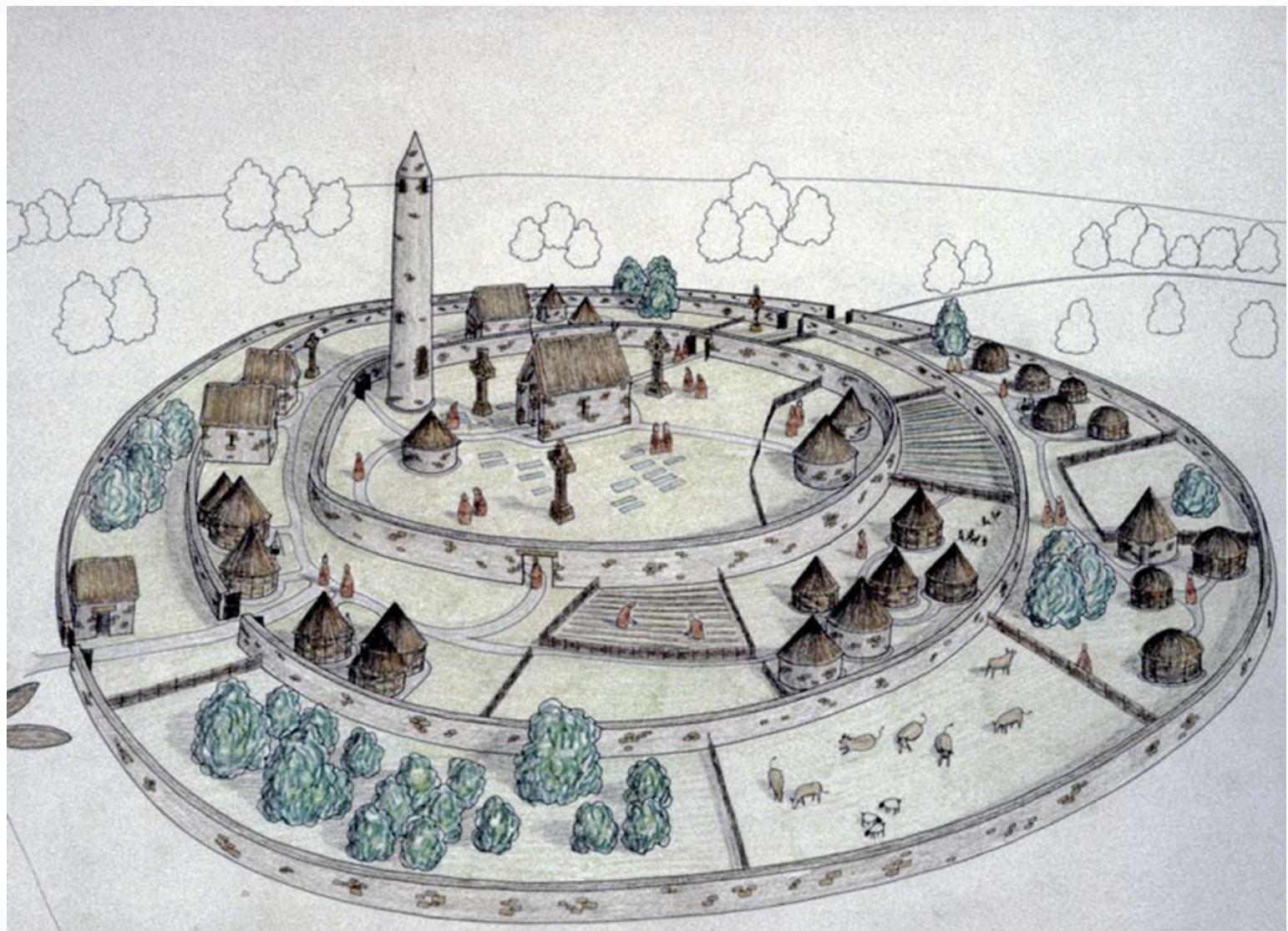




- Gallarus Oratory
- Clonmacnoise →
- Sceiling Mhichil



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# Arts and Crafts

- **Manuscripts :**
- Some monks had jobs as scribes.
  - They would write and copy the gospels and psalms and the stories of heroes.
  - Leabhar Ceannais na hÉireann. (The book of Kells) :
    - Beautiful Decoration
    - From the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century
    - 4 gospels



Санкторис  
Христи  
Императори

- **High Crosses:**

- The stone masons worked with stone to make high decorative crosses.
- They would use it to mark a grave or at the centre-point of monastery.
  - Cross Naomh Mhuireadach (Co.Lú)

# Manuscripts

- Monks introduced reading and writing to Ireland.
- Copied by hand.  MANUSCRIPTS
- Scribes made the manuscripts in the Scriptorium
- Scribes wrote on vellum (calf skin) or parchment (sheep skin).
- Quills instead of pens.
- Ink made from plants and powdered rocks.
- Some illustrations made from gold leaf.
  - The Book of Kells
  - Leabhar Laighin
  - The Book of Durrow

# Metalwork

- Monks also made beautiful objects in gold and silver, decorated with precious stones.
- Celtic design (like La Tene)
- Used for religious services possibly.
- Stored where?
- **Filigree** ? the skill of twisting golden wires tightly and thinly to create a decoration
  - Cailís Ardach (Ardagh Chalice)

# The Golden Age

- The Dark Ages [?] the time in History after the fall of the Roman Empire. All Tribes were at war with each other all over the continent. Not a place for learning, art and documenting to survive.
- Art and learning were kept alive by the Celtic monks.
- Ireland became known as '*the land of saints and scholars'*
- These Irish Monasteries sent many monks abroad to teach and spread Christianity. Spreading their skills with them.
- 800AD [?] Irish monasteries famous all over Europe. Many students came to study with them. = *The Golden Age in Irish Learning.*