

Mar. 5, St. Ciaran, Bishop of Ossory

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Mar. 5, 2010

Today is the feast of St. Ciaran (Kieran), "first-born of the saints of Ireland", founder of the monastery of Saighir, first bishop of [Ossory](#). [1]

"His father's name was Lubhaidh, and was descended from the nobility of Osraighe. The name of his mother was Liedania, and was a native of Corca-Laighe, in the western part of Munster. Before she conceived Ciaran she saw in a vision, as if a star had fallen into her mouth, and she revealed the same to the Druids and learned men of her time, who informed her that she would bring forth a son who would be the greatest prodigy of his age."

--[St. Ciaran, Patron of Ossory: A Memoir of His Life and Times](#), [2] by John Hogan, Kilkenny, 1876

Ciaran, was born on [Cape Clear Island](#), [3]the southernmost inhabited part of Ireland, eight miles off the coast of West Cork.

Megalithic standing stones, a 5000-year-old passage grave, turtles, sharks, whales, birds, gale-force winds, and wildflowers must have made it a hard place to leave, but when he was thirty, "Kieran set out for Rome, where he was baptised and studied scripture there 'under the abbot of Rome'.

"On his way back to Ireland, twenty years later, he met St Patrick, who told him exactly where to found his settlement, giving him a bell which would only ring when he found the place. This turned out to be *Saighir Chiaráin*, about four miles south-east of Birr, Co Offaly."

-- "[St Kieran of Saighir 6th century: patron of the diocese of Ossory](#)," [4] CatholicIreland.net

St. Ciaran's "first monks" were wild animals, a boar and a doe (archetypal symbols of the old Gods and Goddesses). Ciaran built a hut and wore the skins of animals. Soon, men joined him at Saighir, and his mother came to Ossory to found a community of women.

When Bishop Ciaran's life was drawing to a close, "an angel appeared unto him, . . . and he asked three requests of God through the angel, and the angel granted him what he wished. The first was that every one who was buried in his church and cathedral the gates of hell should be closed against him on the day of judgment. The second request was that whoever would keep holy his own day would not want the riches of this world nor the kingdom of heaven after death. The third request was that the tribe which he belonged to--that is the Ossorians, and to whom he was patron--should never be vanquished in battle by a strange tribe if they came unjustly to invade their territory, but that they were not to make unjust incursions among other tribes."

--Hogan

Because of the first request, the Kings of Ossory chose to be buried at Saighir. Because of the second, the

anniversary of Ciaran's death is still observed: La féile Ciarán, St. Ciaran's Day.

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[1] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11342b.htm>

[2] <http://books.google.com/books?id=zQMFAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html>

[3] <http://www.oilean-chleire.ie/english/index.htm>

[4] <http://www.catholicireland.net/church-a-bible/church/march-saints/1186-5-st-kieran-of-saighir-6th-century-patron-of-the-diocese-of-ossory>