



St Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St Malachy of Armagh

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Saint Malachy (Middle Irish: Máel Máedóc Ua Morgair; Modern Irish: Maelmhaedhoc Ó Morgair) (1095 – 2 November 1148) was an Irish saint and Archbishop of Armagh, to whom were attributed several miracles and an alleged vision of 112 Popes later attributed to the apocalyptic list of the Prophecy of the Popes. He was the first native born Irish saint to be canonised. Malachy, whose family name was Ua Morgair, was born in Armagh in 1095. St. Bernard describes him as having noble birth.[2] He was baptised Máel Máedóc (Malachy) and was trained under Imhar O'Hagan, subsequently Abbot of Armagh. Imhar was in sympathy with the aims of those who sought to reform the Irish church, and it was probably through his influence that Malachy became imbued with their principles. After a long course of studies Malachy was ordained priest by St Cellach (Celsus) in 1119. St Bernard provides many interesting anecdotes regarding St Malachy and highly praises Malachy's zeal for religion both in Connor and Armagh. In 1127, Malachy paid a second visit to Lismore and acted for a time as confessor to Cormac MacCarthy, Prince of Desmond. While Bishop of Down and Connor, Malachy continued to reside at Bangor, and when some of the native princes sacked the two dioceses of Down and Connor, Malachy brought the Bangor monks to Iveragh, County Kerry, where they were welcomed by now King Cormac. On the death of St Celsus (who was buried at Lismore in 1129), St Malachy was appointed Archbishop of Armagh, 1132, which dignity he accepted with great reluctance. Owing to intrigues, he was unable to take possession of his See for two years; even then he had to purchase the Bachal Isu (Staff of Jesus) from Niall, the usurping lay-primate.[2] St Malachy's influence in Irish ecclesiastical affairs has been compared with that of Boniface in Germany. During three years at Armagh, as Bernard of Clairvaux writes, St Malachy restored the discipline of the Church, grown lax during the intruded rule of a series of lay-abbots, and had the Roman Liturgy adopted.[2] St Malachy worked zealously to restore ecclesiastical discipline, restored marriage, renewed the practices of confession and confirmation, and introduced Roman chants in the liturgy. He was also known for his care to the needy as a miracle worker and healer. In his lifetime, he planted apple trees throughout Ireland during time of famine.[4] St Bernard continues: Having extirpated barbarism and re-established Christian morals, and seeing all things tranquil, St Malachy began to think of his own peace. He therefore resigned the Sees of Armagh and Connor, in 1136 or 1137, but retained as Bishop of Down. He founded a priory of Austin Canons at Downpatrick, and was unceasing in his episcopal labours. Early in 1139 he journeyed to Rome, via Scotland, England, and France, visiting St Bernard at Clairvaux. He petitioned Pope Innocent II for pallia for the Sees of Armagh and Cashel, and was appointed legate for Ireland. On his return visit to Clairvaux he obtained five monks for a foundation in Ireland, under Christian, an Irishman, as superior: thus arose the great Abbey of Mellifont in 1142. St Malachy set out on a second journey to Rome in 1148, but on arriving at Clairvaux, he fell sick and died in the arms of St Bernard, on 2 November 1148.

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