

# Kevin of Glendalough

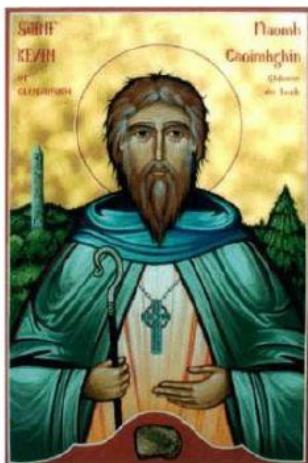
Our venerable father **Kevin of Glendalough, Wonder-worker of Ireland** (also Coemgen, Caoimhghin, Coemgenus, and Kavin) was the abbot of Glendalough Monastery. He was born in 498, and fell asleep in the Lord in 618 at the age of 120 years. His feast day is celebrated on June 3.

St. Kevin was born in the year 498 in the Irish province of Leinster to noble parents, perhaps even descendant of the Kings of Leinster. Tradition holds that when he was born, his mother felt no labour pains, and the snow that fell on the day of his birth melted as it fell around the house. An angel is said to have appeared during the child's baptism, telling his parents that the child should be named "Kevin." St. Cronan, the officiating priest, said, "This was surely an angel of the Lord, and as he named the child so shall he be called." So the babe was baptised Kevin, Coemgen in the Irish tongue, which means "He of Blessed Birth." He is the first person in history to be called Kevin. His childhood was marked by a horrible temper and dislike of other people, although he loved animals.

## The blackbird's nest

At the age of seven, his parents sent him to the monastery run by St. Petroc in Cornwall. While there, Kevin was kneeling, his arms outstretched in prayer, on the first day of Lent in a small hut in the wilderness when a blackbird landed in his palm and proceeded to construct a nest. Kevin remained perfectly still, so as not to disturb the bird, for the whole of Lent. Kevin was fed by the blackbird with berries and nuts. By the end of Lent, the last blackbird hatchlings had flown from the nest, which now lay empty in his hand, and Kevin returned to the monastery for the Paschal celebration.

## Miracles



Saint Kevin loved animals and nature, and many of the miracles attributed to him involve them.

### The Boar and the hounds

It is said that a hunting party was chasing a boar with their hounds. The boar came upon Saint Kevin in prayer beneath a tree and laid down at his feet. The hounds, when they saw the boar at Kevin's feet, also lay down near the saint, not daring to approach the boar while it was under Kevin's protection. The men decided to ignore these signs and to go ahead and slay the boar. However, a flock of birds landed in the tree, and the hunters took this as a sign and left the boar with Kevin.

### Sheep

One day in his youth, Kevin was tending sheep for his parents, when along came a small group of beggars seeking food. Touched by their poverty, Kevin gave them four sheep. However, when the sheep were counted at the end of the day, not one was found to be missing.

### Water to ale

On a day in autumn, Kevin was working in the kitchen at St. Petroc's monastery. He was busy preparing meals for crop gatherers when a number of pilgrims called and asked for food. Kevin, filled with compassion, gave them the harvesters' dinner. He was rebuked by his superiors for his action. He then told the attendants to fill all the ale jars with water and gather together all the bare meat bones. Then he prayed alone and, it is said, the water turned to ale and the bones were covered with meat again.

### The otter

The otter that rescued Kevin's breviary from the lake and brought him fish also brought fish for his monastery. One day, a monk, overcome with greed, decided to capture and kill the otter and make a fine pair of gloves out of the pelt. The otter, however, sensed the danger and disappeared, never returning to the monastery again.

### King Colman's son

King Colman of Faelan had lost to early death, which he blamed on evil spirits, all his sons but one, his youngest. In order to protect him, the king entrusted the baby to St. Kevin's care. Unfortunately, the monastery could not provide for the baby, as there were no cows there to give milk for the babe. Kevin, seeing a doe on the monastery grounds, commanded it to nurse the babe prince along with her fawn, which it did. Alas, a she-wolf killed the doe before the child was ready to abandon milk. As a penitence for this murder, the wolf was commanded to provide milk for the baby and the fawn until both were weaned from milk, which the wolf did.

### St. Kevin's apples

A young man living near the monastery was struck with epilepsy. One day, it was revealed that he would be cured of his malady by eating an apple from the monastery. Unfortunately, the monastery had no apple trees. When Kevin learned of this, he commanded a grove of willows to produce apples, which they did. The young man was cured, and the willows produced apples for over four centuries.

### St. Ciaran's bell

St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise was St. Kevin's soul-friend, and they were very close. When Ciaran approached death, he said: "Let me be carried to a small height." When he looked up at the sky and the vast open air above his head, he said, "Terrible is the way of dying." Then angels went to meet his soul, filling as they did all the space between heaven and earth. He was carried back into the little church, and raising his hands, he blessed his people. Then he told the brethren to shut him up in the church until Kevin should come from Glendalough. Kevin arrived three days after Ciaran's death, having left his monastery as soon as he heard that his closest friend was dying, but he had

been very delayed. At once Ciaran's spirit returned from heaven and reentered his body so that he could commune with Kevin and welcome him. The two friends stayed together for a long time, engaged in mutual conversation, and strengthening their friendship. Then Ciaran blessed Kevin, and Kevin blessed water and administered the Eucharist to Ciaran. Ciaran gave his silver bell to Kevin as a sign of their lasting unity.

**Choose the correct option.**

1. Kevin of Glendalough was of ..... origins.  
humble      noble
2. His mother had a ..... childbirth.  
painless      painful
3. When Kevin was born .....  
there was a snowstorm      snow melted as it fell
4. ..... told his parents to name him Kevin  
A monk      An angel
5. There has been no one called Kevin before him  
True      False
6. He enjoyed the company of .....  
people      animals
7. The blackbird that nested in his palm fed him .....  
berries and nuts      seeds and cherries
8. Kevin ..... the Easter celebration.  
missed      was in time for
9. The hounds ..... the boar.  
killed      stopped chasing
10. Kevin gave a group of ..... four sheep.  
beggars      pilgrims
11. Kevin turned water to wine and bones to bread.  
True      False
12. The otter .....  
managed to escape      was slain by the monk
13. The epileptic man was cured by the ..... apples,  
firs'      willows'
14. Ciaran's spirit did not rise to Heaven until Kevin had administered the Eucharist to him.  
True      False

