AN IRISH JOURNEY
IN SEARCH OF CELTIC CHRISTIANITY

Led by
Sarah Crossan & John Dominic Crossan

July 6 – July 21, 2015

“My Druid is Christ, the son of God, Christ, Son of Mary, the Great Abbot”
Saint Columcille/Columba (521-597)

Day 1, Monday, July 6, 2015: Depart from Newark Airport for the nonstop transatlantic flight into Dublin. Dinner and breakfast on board the aircraft. DB

Day 2, Tues., July 7: We arrive in Ireland and—appropriately—start our Celtic Christian journey in the fifth century with Saint Patrick. A short drive north takes us to the two hills of Tara and Slane. The legend is that Patrick lit the Christian Easter’s First-Fire on Slane in confrontation with the High King’s Beltane First-Fire on Tara. After walking around both hills we drive to Navan for rest, dinner, and overnight. D

Day 3, Wed., July 8: We drive to Ireland’s anciently sacred River Boyne to visit two of the Stone Age passage tombs from the Neolithic Age at Brú na Bóinne. These megalithic structures, built around 5000 years ago, predate the Giza Pyramids in Egypt, and are among the most impressive ancient sites anywhere in the world. We see the Visitor Center, and both Knowth and Newgrange. Dinner and overnight Navan. BD

Day 4, Thurs., July 9: We visit Monasterboice, one of the most famous religious sites in Ireland, to see three 10th century High Crosses, including Muiredach’s Cross, the finest one in all of Ireland. There are several more High Crosses at Kells and those visions in stone reveal very clearly the emphases of Celtic Christianity. Finally, we visit Mellifont Abbey where, for example, the arrival of the continental Cistercian monks on 1142 signaled the end of Celtic and the ascendancy of Roman Christianity. Dinner and overnight Navan. BD

Day 5, Fri., July 10: We drive into Dublin and visit Ireland’s National Museum with its impressive Celtic gold artifacts. It is also an opportunity to ponder those “bog bodies,” human beings sacrificed to Celtic Gods, mummified in peat, and discovered only in modern times. This afternoon, we visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral which contains the largest and most interesting collection of church monuments in Ireland. There is also—or especially—the epitaph and grave of its most famous Dean, Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). Dinner and overnight in Dublin. BD

Day 6, Sat., July 11: Today we explore Glendalough, the setting of some of Ireland’s most important monastic settlements. At the visitor’s center, we will see a film, “Ireland of the Monasteries”, which will give us a brief history of the monastery. We will then take a pilgrimage walk through St. Kevin’s Monastic City and visit the remains of St. Kevin’s Cell, the Reelft Church and Tempall na Skellig. Also, through the graveyard, over the river, and left about 1/3rd of a mile down a slope is the old Abbey Church. We will have some free time in the afternoon to explore the lake on our own. Dinner and overnight in Glendalough. BD

Day 7, Sun., July 12: Today we explore Glendalough, the setting of some of Ireland’s most important monastic settlements. At the visitor’s center, we will see a film, “Ireland of the Monasteries”, which will give us a brief history of the monastery. We will then take a pilgrimage walk through St. Kevin’s Monastic City and visit the remains of St. Kevin’s Cell, the Reelft Church and Tempall na Skellig. Also, through the graveyard, over the river, and left about 1/3rd of a mile down a slope is the old Abbey Church. We will have some free time in the afternoon to explore the lake on our own. Dinner and overnight in Glendalough. BD

Day 8, Mon., July 13: This morning we drive through the Gap in the Wicklow Mountains along the ancient pilgrim road from Glendalough to County Kildare to visit the famous 8th and 9th century Celtic High Crosses at Castledermot and Moone. There is also an almost perfectly preserved 10th century round tower at that former site. Those crosses include the second tallest in Ireland. In the afternoon we continue to Kildare town where the Cathedral and Round Tower remind us that Saint Brigid (c. 451-525) was once Abbess there of a monastery for both male and female monks. Dinner
Day 9, Tues., July 14: We depart for a major visit to Clonmacnoise, the site of St. Ciaran’s Monastery, on the River Shannon at the crossroads of ancient Ireland. Founded in 546, it was one of the internationally famous Irish monasteries. There are extensive ruined churches, round towers, and magnificent carved crosses—the originals are inside in the visitor center with replicas outside. We continue to Rossaveal where we will board a ferry to the port of Kiloran on Inis Mór in the Aran Islands. We will have dinner and overnight on Inis Mór. BD

Day 10, Wed., July 15: St. Enda founded a monastery here in 485 A.D., which drew many men and women of faith to the island and resulted in the 10 monasteries that were eventually built here. We will begin our introduction to the island this morning with a visit to what remains of his monastic site – the stump of a round tower, the fragments of a High Cross, and two smaller churches. We visit the monastery of St. Brecan at the “Seven Churches”. It was contemporary of and maybe even competitive with the monastery of St. Enda. We also see the only clochán or beehive cell – built with dry-wall corbelling – on Inis Mór. Dinner and overnight Inis Mór. BD

Day 11, Thurs., July 16: We will continue our exploration of Inis Mór, beginning with the exceptionally impressive Bronze Age fortress of Dún Aonghasa overlooking a sheer 300-foot drop to the Atlantic. It matches the more famous Cliffs of Moher on the other side of the sea in County Clare. In the early afternoon, we return to the mainland by ferry. Dinner and overnight in the beautiful Glenlo Abbey Hotel near Galway City. BD

Day 12, Fri., July 17: We travel south today along the coast through the Burren, a great rocky expanse in Ireland’s County Clare. Its ancient, awe inspiring stone structures hold secrets from the past. We will see Kilmacduagh (Church of the son of Duach), the monastery which was founded by Saint Comhac MacDuagh about A.D. 600. The most conspicuous feature of the well-preserved round tower (33m high) is that it leans almost 50cm from the perpendicular. These tall buildings served as watch towers, belfries and places of refuge during attacks by marauders. The extensive remains include a cathedral, Church of St. John the Baptist, Glebe House, O’Hayes Church and St. Mary’s Church. We travel to Dingle Town on the Dingle peninsula for dinner and overnight. (There is a saying: Dingle isn’t heaven, but it’s only a local call from there). BD

Day 13, Sat., July 18: We begin our time on the Dingle peninsula with an extended drive along the beautiful coast. We visit ancient beehive huts from the Bronze Age and an ancient Christian Church, the somewhat mysterious and corbel-vaulted Gallarus Oratory, whose date and purpose is quite uncertain, dated possibly as late as the 12th century. We continue to the early and medieval Christian site of Kilmalkedar with its 12th century Romanesque church (once stoneroofed) and a standing stone carved with ogham characters. Dinner and overnight in Dingle. BD

Day 14, Sun., July 19: Plan A: If the weather is good and the sea calm we will take boats out to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Skellig Michael (a sea-crag dedicated to the Archangel Michael). After landing, those ready, willing, and able will ascend around 600 steps to a 6th-8th century monastery of six dry-cobbled beehive huts, oratories, and crosses. You can sense here, as in no other extant place, the beat of Celtic Christianity’s monastic heart—if only we can get there. Plan B: For all of us if the weather negates Skellig Michael and, even if some of us go, for others who prefer bus to boat, there will be a drive to Killarney and around the beautiful Ring of Kerry. Dinner and overnight in Dingle. BD

Day 15, Mon., July 20: We depart Dingle this morning with our first stop at the Rock of Cashel, a giant circular mound rising 200 feet above the surrounding plain. Legend has it that the devil, flying over Ireland in a hurry, took a bite out of the Slieve Bloom Mountains to clear his path and spat it out here in the Golden Vale at Cashel. We will see a spectacular group of medieval buildings in a stunning site. From Cashel, we continue on to our hotel near the Shannon Airport. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. BD

Day 16, Tuesday, July 21, 2015: Depart our hotel for our return flight to the USA arriving back this afternoon. BM

B – Breakfast  L – Lunch  D – Dinner  M – Meals on aircraft

Pricing:

Pricing is based on 1.33 Euro = 1 USD. If the exchange rate changes, price may change. Airline taxes and fuel surcharges are EXCLUDED. On August 24, 2014, these were $401.50 and will be added to your final invoice. Pricing is based on a minimum of 35 participants.

$ 4,699.00 per person double occupancy
$ 599.00 per person single supplement:
$ 4,099.00 per person land only price

Terms and Conditions:
Deposit of $300.00 per person due with application.
Final payment due May 1, 2015

Cancellation Penalties:
From August 27, 2014 – April 30, 2015 - $300 per person
May 1, 2015 or later - No refund