

INTRODUCTION

This lesson uses *Journey*, a contemporary religious painting that was created by Mark Armstrong to mark 60 years of SCIAF. The painting traces a story that begins in St Columbkille's Church in Rutherglen and flows outward to reflect the mission of the Church in Scotland (through SCIAF), global solidarity and faith in action.

Through guided discussion and reflection, pupils will explore how faith is rooted in place and history, how Saints shape the life of the Church in Scotland, and how local beginnings can grow into global mission. Particular focus is given to St Columbkille (St Columba), whose missionary work laid foundations for Christianity in Scotland and whose life continues to inspire holiness and service today.

This lesson can be used in different ways depending on the time available. You may choose to deliver the full lesson sequence (Activities 1–3) or select individual elements. The full lesson would take approximately 45–60 minutes but can also be adapted for assemblies, or shorter classroom reflections.

This lesson supports pupils to:

1. Understand Global Citizenship Education as an expression of Christian faith witness, connecting local roots and personal identity to global responsibility. **(SOC 2-01a, SOC 2-03a) (SOC 3-01a)**
2. Create artwork that recognises art as a powerful gateway to empathy, reflection and action. **(EXA 2-02a, EXA 2-05a, EXA 2-07a) (EXA 3-02a)**
3. Reflect on how artwork can stimulate prayer and engagement with the Word of God. **(RERC 2-12a)**
4. Respond to the work of artist Mark Armstrong, representing SCIAF's history, by discussing thoughts and feelings and offering constructive comment on the artwork. **(EXA 2-07a) (EXA 3-07a)**
5. Understand how the social justice mission of the Catholic Church in Scotland is realised through SCIAF, and my responsibility to respond to the needs of others to these issues. **(RERC 2-24a) (RERC 3-24a)**

LEARNING INTENTIONS:

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We are learning to:

- understand how faith is rooted in place, community, and history.
- reflect on how art inspired by faith can support prayer and understanding.
- know key facts about St Columbkille and his missionary work in Scotland.
- understand what it means to be holy and to be a saint.
- recognise how our faith asks us to respond to the needs of others globally.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

I can:

- describe how the painting represents place, journey and mission.
- give constructive comment on the painting Journey.
- explain one or two key facts about St Columbkille and name his feast day (9th June).
- describe what an illuminated letter is and why monks decorated them.
- Identify the gifts of the Holy Spirit shown in St Columba's life.
- explain how his example can inspire me to live my faith today.

PLANNING OUTLINE:

ACTIVITY 1 – JOURNEY

You will need: Journey.jpeg, Journey.pdf, Journey.mp4

First look:

Display Journey.jpeg (on the whiteboard, individual iPads or printed copies). Allow one minute of silent looking time. Then tell the pupils it is a painting created by artist Mark Armstrong for the 60th anniversary of SCIAF in 2025. Ask:

- What do you notice?
- Where does your eye travel?
- What places or symbols stand out?

Guided interpretation:

You may now wish to explore questions such as:

- What might the river symbolise?
- Where does the river seem to be going — and why might that matter?
- Does the journey look finished or ongoing? Why?
- How can actions in one place affect people somewhere else?
- Why do you think the artist used bright, bold colours?
- What details did you not notice at first glance?
- What do the patchwork fields and communities tell us about people working together?
- How might the WEE BOXES represent small actions making a big difference?
- What does this painting encourage us to think about or reflect on?

Allow pupils time to share observations and build on each other's ideas.

Artist interpretation:

Now watch the video Journey.mp4 ([YouTube](#)); Artist Mark Armstrong tells the story of the painting. Now using Journey.pdf; an image of the painting with captions. Use the 10 caption prompts to guide further discussion to help pupils notice different elements of the artwork. Encourage them to look carefully, pointing out that if their thoughts are different from Mark the artist, or from each other, that this isn't wrong but is in fact the beauty of art and how it speaks to us all differently.

Your own SCIAF artwork:

If time allows, pupils can research examples of SCIAF's work with communities around the world using these links:

www.sciaf.org.uk
www.youtube.com/SCIAFTV
www.instagram.com/sciaf_insta

Invite pupils to create their own piece of artwork that shows how the Church responds to the needs of others through SCIAF.

ACTIVITY 2 - THE HISTORY OF ST COLUMBKILLE

You will need: JourneyPPT

Use the PowerPoint slides 1-8 and notes to introduce the life of St Columbkille, his mission and artwork in illuminated letters.

At the end of the activity, you can ask pupils to design their own illuminated manuscript e.g. take the initials of your name, write them in large lettering and then decorate with patterns or pictures of items, that are important to you.

ACTIVITY 3 - GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

You will need: JourneyPPT

Use the PowerPoint slides 9-14 and notes to look at the Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

As we look at moments from St Columbkille's life, ask the pupils to decide which gift of the Holy Spirit we can see.

Use slide 15 for a Think – Pair – Share Reflection

THINK (Quiet reflection – 1–2 minutes)

Ask pupils to think quietly about one or two of these questions:

- How can people see God in my actions?
- How might the Holy Spirit inspire what I say and do?
- How do I share what I know about God with others?
- How can I show others the beauty of God in the world?
- How do I live my faith at school, at home, and in my parish?

PAIR (Discuss with a partner – 2–3 minutes)

Ask pupils to share their ideas with a partner.

Give pupils one or two of these discussion questions:

- When have you seen someone show their faith through their actions?
- What could we do more often to share kindness, faith or knowledge about God?
- Which Gift of the Holy Spirit might help us live this way?

SHARE (Whole class discussion)

Invite a few pupils to share their thoughts.

Plenary:

Follow up questions:

- What is one way we can show others God's love this week?
- How might the Holy Spirit help us live more like St Columbkille?