

Spencer Strub

Felix Odulanus

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Felix Odulanus (*mid-12th c. – † 1202)

1. Name variants: F. O'Dulany, O'Dullany, Ó Dubhshláine, Ua Duib Sláin

2. Places: Baltinglass, Mellifont; Jerpoint; Ossory

3. Biography: F. was born to the O Dubhshláine family in Upper Ossory (present County Laois). Later tradition holds that he entered the religious life as a youth at Baltinglass or Mellifont and thence was chosen as abbot of Jerpoint in the mid-12th c. Documentary evidence for this tradition is scarce. Records begin with his election as bishop of Ossory in 1178. F.'s episcopate coincided with the ongoing Norman colonization of Ireland and the conflict that attended it, but he nevertheless oversaw a program of ecclesiastical expansion in his diocese: the abbey of Jerpoint formally acceded to the Cistercian Order in 1180, and Killenny Abbey in 1185, and the Augustinian priory of Kells was founded in 1193. He objected to Gerald of Wales' critical sermon on the Irish clergy at the Dublin Lent Synod of 1186. He is believed to be buried in Jerpoint Abbey in a tomb covered with an effigy of a bishop, its face worn by centuries of pilgrims' hands.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: –

b. Liturgical commemoration: 24 Jan

c. Patronage: No patronage is known, although Felix's tomb was a pilgrimage destination into the 19th c.

d. Attributes: –

5. Fontes: ROTHE, *De Ossoriensi Dioecesi*, British Library Sloane MS 4796; C. HENRIQUEZ, *Fasciculus sanctorum ordinis Cisterciensis*, 1623, 90.

6. Literature: W. CARRIGAN, *The History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory* 1, 1905, 23–29; *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis*, tr. H. E. BUTLER, 1937, 96; C. S. Ó CONBHUIDHE, *The Origins of Jerpoint Abbey Co. Kilkenny*, in: *Cîteaux* 14 (1963), 293–306.

7. Illustrations: The early 13th-c. stone tomb effigy of a bishop, depicted with mitre, chasuble, and crozier, in Jerpoint Abbey is held to be F. O'Dullany. Described in J. HUNT, *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture, 1200-1600: A Study of Irish Tombs with Notes on Costume and Armour* 1, 1974, 173.

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