

## What is the story behind St. Brigid?

Little is known of Brigid's life but from legend, myth, and folklore. All information about Brigid comes from biographies of saints written long after she lived. A churchman named Cogitosus was the first to write about Brigid, in about A.D. 650, or approximately 200 years after her birth.

According to these accounts, she was born in the province of Leinster around 450 AD, to a noble father and an enslaved mother and was sold along with her mother to a Druid whom she later converted to Christianity.

The story behind St Bridget provides an overview of the life and legacy of one of Ireland's three patron saints. It highlights her conversion of people to Christianity, and her numerous miracles, such as giving away and miraculously replacing household food, turning a wooden column into a living tree, and hanging her cloak on a sunbeam. Her story touches on the historical context of her veneration and her association with the ancient holiday of Imbolc (one of the four seasonal festivals -Spring) - an ancient holiday celebrating the start of spring, season of fertility.

After she founded her monastic community at Kildare and became its abbess, she also traveled, preached and was said to have cured Christians of serious debilities such as blindness and muteness, all in imitation of Christ. Instead of battling wrongdoers, she found peaceful resolutions to violent situations. Even after her death, miracles attributed to her continued to occur at her shrine.

St. Brigid's Day, celebrated on February 1st, has always been a significant event in Ireland, and in 2022, it was declared a national holiday. She is the patron of healers, poets, beer, blacksmiths and dairy workers, as well as a figure associated with creativity and womanhood. Brigid was venerated as "Mary of the Gael," a saint for women, shepherds, beggars, refugees and those in childbirth.

Despite her significant contributions, her church, St. Brigid's church at Kildare, fell into ruin and was only rebuilt in 1875 by the Protestant Church of Ireland.

Today, people keep St. Brigid's Day by weaving a special reed cross or visiting a holy well whose waters, blessed by Brigid, are believed to heal illness. The Brigidine Sisters of Kildare attend their ever-burning flame for Brigid, as nuns did in the Middle Ages.

# Greetings for St Brigid's Day

As Brigidine Sisters, together with our associates, friends and colleagues in ministry celebrate the feast of our Patroness, St Brigid of Kildare on 1st February, we are mindful of the increasingly urgent needs of our planet and our world and we renew our trust in the God of life calling us to be messengers of hope.

In the spirit of Brigid, a threshold woman, we recommit ourselves to contemplative living and decisive action for justice in 'the bits and pieces of everyday life'. (Patrick Kavanagh)

Brigid, woman of earth and of fire, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of contemplation and of action, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of peace and of justice, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of faith and of hope, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of compassion and mercy, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of expansive inclusion, be our inspiration

Brigid, woman of Gospel living, be our inspiration

Brigid woman of strength and gentleness, be our inspiration.

Happy St Brigid's Day!



Figure 1: St. Brigid of Kildare.  
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## The making of St Brigid's crosses on the 31st of January is still popular in many Irish homes.

The most recognisable cross is the four-armed cross, popularised since 1961 by its use as an emblem for Irish television.

Regional styles and variations of St Brigid's crosses existed throughout Ireland and often many styles were made in each home.

Traditional designs were diamond, interlaced, or wheel-shaped, and could have two, three, or four arms. The simplest ones consisted of two strips of wood or straw plaited together to form a cross.

Straw, rushes, and reeds were most common, but grass, hay, wood, goose quills, wire and fabric were also used to form crosses.

Whatever the chosen material, it was sprinkled with holy water beforehand and a prayer to welcome the saint into the home was often recited.

Crosses were hung up in homes and animal sheds so as to invoke St Brigid's blessing.