



St. Brigid of Kildare

Resources for the Feast Day and Bank Holiday
February 1 & February 6, 2023



diocese
of limerick
our catholic community

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*St. Brigid stained glass, 1903, public
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The St. Brigid's Bank Holiday is new this year, and is celebrated on February 6, 2023. Her liturgical feast day is February 1. It was established to honour Ireland's most famous female saint. Here are some resources to help keep the focus of the Bank Holiday on its patron.

History of St. Brigid

"St. Brigid was born in 450 AD in Faughart, near Dundalk in Co. Louth. Her father, Dubhthach, was a pagan chieftain of Leinster and her mother, Broicsech, was a Christian. It is thought that Brigid's mother was born in Portugal but was kidnapped by Irish pirates and brought to Ireland to work as a slave, just like St. Patrick was. Brigid's father named her after one of the most powerful goddesses of the pagan religion - the goddess of fire, whose manifestations were song, craftsmanship, and poetry, which the Irish considered the flame of knowledge. He kept Brigid and her mother as slaves even though he was a wealthy man. Brigid spent her early life cooking, cleaning, washing and feeding the animals on her father's farm.

"... When Brigid turned eighteen, she stopped working for her father. Her father wanted her to find a husband but Brigid had decided that she would spend her life working for God by looking after poor, sick and elderly people. Legend says that she prayed that her beauty would be taken away from her so no one would seek her hand in marriage; her prayer was granted. Brigid's charity angered her father because he thought she was being too generous to the poor. When she finally gave away his jewel-encrusted sword to a leper, her father realised that she would be best suited to the religious life. Brigid finally got her wish and entered the convent. Legend also says that Brigid regained her beauty after making her vows and that God made her more beautiful than ever. News of her good works spread, and soon many young girls from all over the country joined her in the convent. Brigid founded many convents all over Ireland; the most famous one was in Co. Kildare. It is said that this convent was built beside an oak tree where the town of Kildare now stands. Around 470, she also founded a double monastery, for nuns and monks, in Kildare. As Abbess of this foundation she wielded considerable power, but was a very wise and prudent superior.

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"The Abbey of Kildare became one of the most prestigious monasteries in Ireland, and was famous throughout Christian Europe.

"St. Brigid also founded a school of art, including metal work and illumination, over which St. Conleth presided. In the scriptorium of the monastery, the famous illuminated manuscript the Book of Kildare was created."

"There is evidence that Brigid was a good friend of Saint Patrick's and that the Trias Thaumaturga claimed, 'Between St. Patrick and Brigid, the pillars of the Irish people, there was so great a friendship of charity that they had but one heart and one mind. Through him and through her Christ performed many great works.'"

Adapted and Drawn From:

<https://www.stbrigid.ie/story-of-st-brigid.html>
https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=453

The Legend of St. Brigid's Cloak

"She approached the King of Leinster requesting the land on which to build her monastery. The place she selected in Kildare was ideal. It was near a lake where water was available, in a forest where there was firewood and near a fertile plain on which to grow crops. The King refused her request. Brigid was not put off by his refusal. Rather, she and her sisters prayed that the King's heart would soften. She made her request again but this time she asked, "Give me as much land as my cloak will cover."

Seeing her small cloak, he laughed and then granted this request. However, Brigid had instructed her four helpers each to take a corner of the cloak and walk in opposite directions – north, south, east and west. As they did this the cloak began to grow and spread across many acres. She now had sufficient land on which to build her monastery. The King and his entire household were dismayed and amazed. They realised that this woman was truly blessed by God. The King became a patron of Brigid's monastery, assisting her with money, food and gifts. Later he converted to Christianity. It was on this land in Kildare that she built her dual monastery c. 470."

Taken From:

<https://brigidine.org.au/about-us/our-patroness/legend-of-st-brigid-s-cloak/>

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St. Brigid's Fire: Pagan Origins and Christian Light

"A sacred fire burned in Kildare reaching back into pre-Christian times. Scholars suggest that priestesses used to gather on the hill of Kildare to tend their ritual fires while invoking a goddess named Brigid to protect their herds and to provide a fruitful harvest.

When Brigid built her monastery and church in Kildare she continued the custom of keeping the fire alight. For her and her nuns the fire represented the new light of Christianity, which reached Irish shores early in the fifth century. In Brigid's time, the number of her nuns who tended the flame was nineteen. On the 20th day, Brigid tended it herself.

The sacred flame survived possibly up to the suppression of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. In 1993 the flame was re-lit in the Market Square, Kildare, by Sr. Mary Teresa Cullen, then congregational leader of the Brigidine Sisters."

Taken From:

<https://brigidine.org.au/about-us/our-patroness/brigids-light-fire/>

Ideas to Bring Parishioners Together

To honour St. Brigid on this Bank Holiday, consider hosting a celebration after Mass! Find volunteers to:

- make sandwiches
- serve tea
- welcome people
- provide music

Find someone who can instruct parishioners in making St. Brigid's Crosses - or show this video:

<https://www.icatholic.ie/how-to-make-st-brigid-cross/>. Provide the rushes and be sure to offer a blessing of the St. Brigid's Crosses afterwards.

For the children, print out this St. Brigid colouring page and provide crayons or other art supplies:

<https://www.thecatholickid.com/saint-brigid-of-ireland-coloring-page/>. Take this opportunity to celebrate as a parish - with many workplaces closed, families will be together!

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Prayers and Blessings for St. Brigid's Day

Blessing for St. Brigid's Crosses

Father of all creation and Lord of Light,
you have given us life and entrusted your creation to us to use it
and to care for it. We ask you to bless these crosses made of
green rushes in memory of holy Brigid, who used the cross to
recall and to teach your Son's life, death and resurrection. May
these crosses be a sign of our sharing in the Paschal Mystery of
your Son and a sign of your protection of our lives, our land and
its creatures through Brigid's intercession during the coming
year and always. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The crosses are sprinkled with holy water:

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be on
these crosses and on the places where they hang and on
everyone who looks at them. Amen.

St. Brigid's Prayer

You were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace
cover those who are troubled and anxious,
and may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world.
Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.
Brigid you were a voice for the wounded and the weary.
Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May we grow each day into greater
wholeness in mind, body and spirit.
Amen.

St. Brigid's Blessing

May Brigid bless the house wherein we dwell.
Bless every fireside, every wall and door.
Bless every heart that beats beneath its roof.
Bless every hand that toils to bring its joy.
Bless every foot that walks portals through.
May Brigid bless the house that shelters us.

Taken From:

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/01/31/resources-for-the-feast-of-saint-brigid-1-february-2021/>

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General Blessing

Bail' Ó Dhia oraibh
Ó Shamhain go lá le Bríde
Ó lá le Bríde go Bealtaine
Ó Bealtaine go Lúnasa
Is o Lúnasa go Samhain.

General Blessing

God's blessing on you,
From Hallowe'en to Brigid's Day
From Brigid's Day to May Day
From May Day to August
And from August to Halloween.

For Stock and Land

Lord, we thank you for your generous gifts: for soil and water, and the fruit of the earth. Through the grace of Our Lord Jesus, and the intercession of St. Brigid, we pray that our farmland, our stock, and our crops may enjoy the protection of Brigid's mantle so that loss and disease may be kept at bay. We make this prayer through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

John Irvine's Prayer to St. Brigid

Dear Saint Brigid of the kine bless these little fields of mine;
The pasture and the shady trees, bless the butter and the cheese.
Bless the cows with coats of silk, and the brimming pails of milk.
Bless the hay and bless the grass; bless the seasons as they pass,
And heaven's blessing will prevail, Brigid - Mary of the Gael.

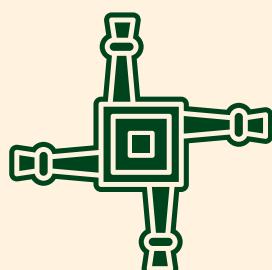
High Above Enthroned

High above enthroned in glory
Sweetest Saint of Erin's Isle
See thy children kneel before thee
Turn on us a Mother's smile. (chorus)

Chorus

Sancta Mater hear our pleading
Faith and hope and holy love
Sweet Saint Brigid, Spouse of Jesus
Sent to us from heaven above.

Dear St. Brigid, Erin's children
Far and near o'er land and sea
In the world and in the cloister
Fondly turn with love to thee. (chorus)



Hail Saint Brigid throned in glory
Hail O Mary of the Gael
We thy children kneel before thee
Pride of Erin's women, hail! (chorus)

Taken From:

Ríordáin, John J. Ó. *Brigid of Ireland*. Redemptorist Communications. p. 50-53.

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Snowdrops: The Footsteps of St. Brigid

The footsteps of St Brigid are everywhere I go
Rising out of darkness from the earth below
Little bells of Spring time -
Pure and white as snow.

The footsteps of St Brigid
Have travelled far and wide
Unconstrained by boundaries,
Monarchies or tides -

An abbess and a foundress
A holy one of God
Whose prayers rose up like incense
From rock and field and bog.

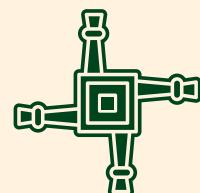
O Saint Brigid, Ireland's children
Still recall with greatest pride
All you did for church and country
With the Cross your truest guide.

Ask the Saviour now to bless us
Ask Our Lady to enfold
In maternal wraps of goodness
All we are and all we hold.

Dear to us is Mother Ireland
Dear to us this faith passed down
Help us to uphold and value
All that won for you a crown.

May we follow in your footsteps
As you look from heaven above
May you shower upon your children
Heaven's grace and heaven's love.

St Bridget's cross
hung over door
which did the house
from fire secure
as Gillo thought, O
powerful charm
to keep a house
from taking harm;
and tho' the dogs
and servants slept,
by Bridget's care the
house was kept.



For children, *The Story of Saint Brigid*, by Caitriona Clarke is perfect for those ages 7-10. Purchase it online at Veritas.ie or in-store.

Fr. John J. Ó Ríordáin's booklet "Brigid of Ireland" is an excellent primer on the saint for teens and adults. It is thorough and informative, yet easy to read and not too long. It is available at www.redcoms.org.