
Celtic Saints

BRIGID

A
CELEBRATION

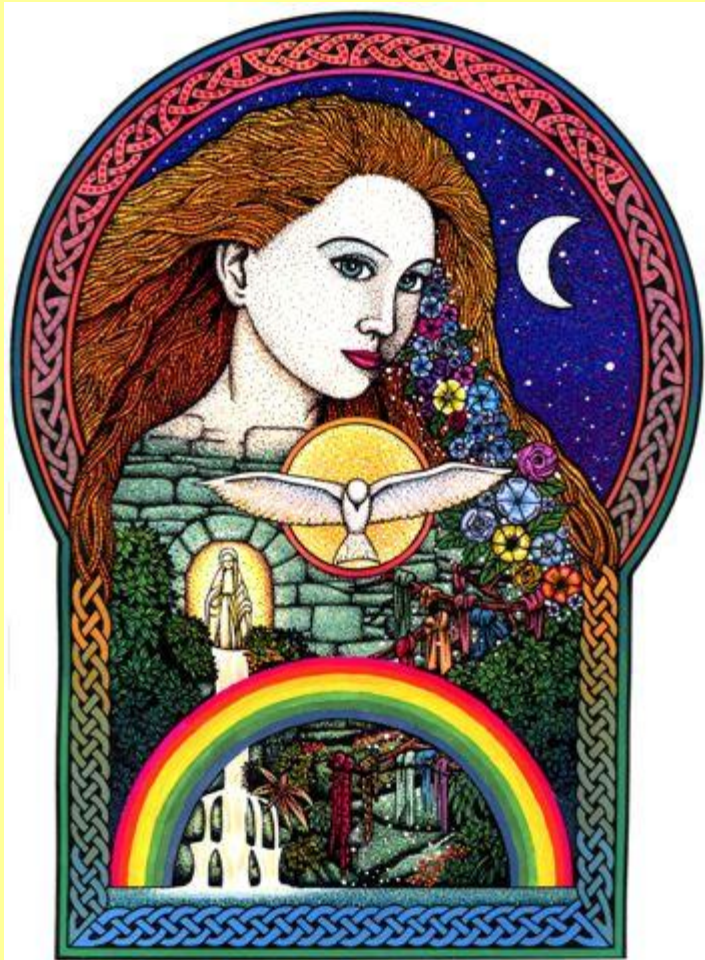




*St Brigid
because
she was
so
lovely
and
gentle
was called:*

*Mary
of the
Gael.*

*Mary
of the
Irish*



St Brigid of Ireland, known also as Bridget, Brigid, or Bride (c. 453-c. 524), Irish nun, born in or near County Louth. According to tradition, her father was of royal blood and her mother was a slave.

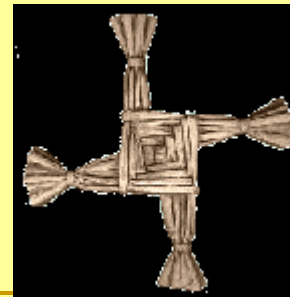
She was renowned for her beauty, but when her father tried to give her in marriage, she demurred.

To rid herself of admirers, St Brigid prayed for deformity and had an attack of a fifth-century version of the Elephant Man disease. Because of her piety she was allowed to leave her father and become a nun. Legend has it that Angels shoved the priest aside to present her with her nun's veil and restore her beauty.



St Brigid became a bishop and founded four monasteries, including the famous monastery of Kildare. A woman of rare ability and dedication, she became, along with St Patrick and St Columba, one of the three patron saints of Ireland. St Brigid is held in great reverence in England and Scotland as well as in Ireland.

Feast Day - 1 February





Brigid of Ireland

In this sculpture a young Brigid is carrying a pitcher of milk (or perhaps beer) while a calf rests at her feet. She holds a staff and the background is adorned with oak leaves overhanging an arbor formed from a "Brigid's Cross." A duck, owl, keg, and spring flowers also are symbolic.





One of the most widespread Irish customs associated with St Brigid is the making of the Cros Bride (St Brigid's Cross) which may have originated as a sun symbol.

The cross is traditionally woven on St Brigid's Eve and placed in the home, usually over the door, to bless all who come in or go out, and to gain protection of the household from fire and disease.



One of the most widespread Irish customs associated with St Brigid is the making of the Cross Bride (St Brigid's Cross) which may have originated as a sun symbol. In St Brigid's time, it was customary for rushes to be strewn on the floor of a dwelling. Legend tells us that, one day, Brigid visited a pagan chieftain who was on his deathbed. As she sat by his bed, she reached down and picked up some rushes from the floor and wove them into a cross. The chieftain asked what she was doing and she told him about the significance of the Christian cross and how Jesus had died to save all people, including him. He was overcome by the idea that he could be loved so much and was converted to Christianity before he died.

The St Brigid's cross is traditionally woven on St Brigid's Eve and placed in the home, usually over the door, to bless all who come in or go out, and to gain protection of the household from fire and disease. In some parts of Ireland, as they hung up the cross, they said this prayer:

"May the blessing of God and the Trinity be on this cross, and on the Home where it hangs and on everyone who looks at it." Often, a cross would be placed in the cow byre to protect the animals and to keep the milk flowing. It became, in some places, a symbol of peace and goodwill, and was offered as an indication of a desire for friendship after a local quarrel.

The cross has endured from generation to generation, surviving great persecution, oppression and hunger.



Five Prayer Stones

Notice the five prayer stones standing in line. The practice is to stop at each in turn and dwell on an aspect or quality of Brigid. As you leave each stone it is customary to say 'A Naoimh Bhríd, guí orainn' (St Brigid pray for us).



The First Prayer Stone:

Brigid: A Woman of the land.

Brigid was very much a woman of the land. Many of the stories about her tell of her working the land, caring for the animals and preparing food and drink. While Brigid was in the fields intent upon her care for the land and the animals, a mischievous youth craftily sidled up to her testing her generosity to the poor. Always in different garb he came to her seven times requesting help and he carried off seven sheep from her in one day and hid them in a secret place. In the evening when the flock was due to be driven to the fold to be counted it was found to be complete. When the youth saw this he brought back to her the seven sheep of the flock that he had stolen and marvelled at the miracle wrought by Brigid.



The Second Prayer Stone:

Brigid the Peacemaker.

Brigid is often depicted as the one who intervened in disputes between rival factions so as to bring healing and reconciliation. Brigid was teaching a group of people about God when she noticed nine men dressed in particular guise who were shouting in a grotesque and offensive way and destroying everything in their paths. With the most wicked vows and oaths, they thirsted for bloodshed and planned the slaughter and murder of other people. Brigid spoke to them that they might abandon their warring ways and repent. But they refused to do so. Brigid prayed and prayed to God for them, and eventually in their dreams they committed the bloodshed, but never in fact murdered anyone. When they realised what had happened they came back to thank Brigid and were filled with peace and repentance.



Prayer Stone Three:

Brigid the Friend of the Poor

Tradition tells us that Brigid had an extraordinary compassion and concern for the poor people of her day. Her generosity to those in need is legendary.

When Brigid was a certain age she was sent to the dairy to churn and make butter from cows' milk. At the end of the day she was required to have produced a plentiful return of milk and curds and measure of churned butter. However, during each day Brigid gave away to the poor and to the wayfarers as much milk and butter as they needed. In spite of this at the close of each day her quota of production was always filled.

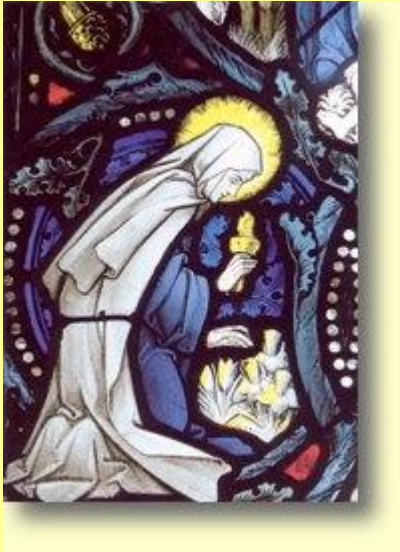


Prayer Stone Four:

Brigid: the Hearthwoman

The whole idea of hospitality as an expression of love is central to Brigid, the Hearthwoman. Brigid had a welcome for all and made the Abbey a safe place of refuge and sanctuary.

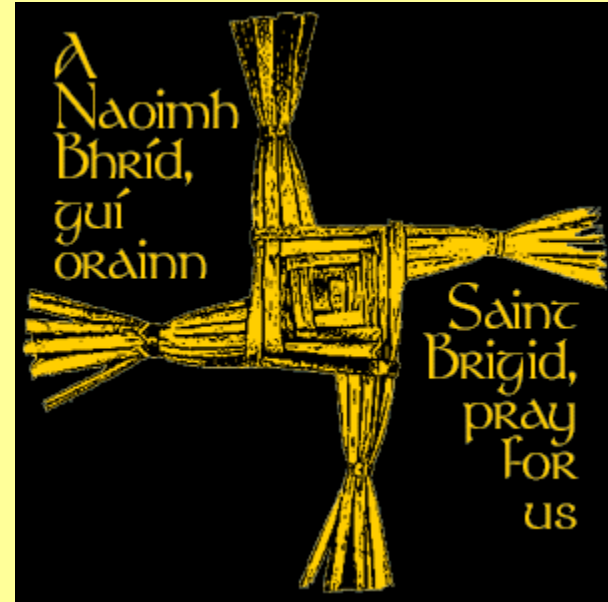
A group of lepers came to Brigid looking for some Ale as they were very thirsty and hungry. She had no Ale, only some water which had been prepared for bathing. She blessed this water with faith and it changed into excellent ale which the lepers drank in abundance. Brigid's hospitality became known throughout all of Ireland.



Prayer Stone Five:

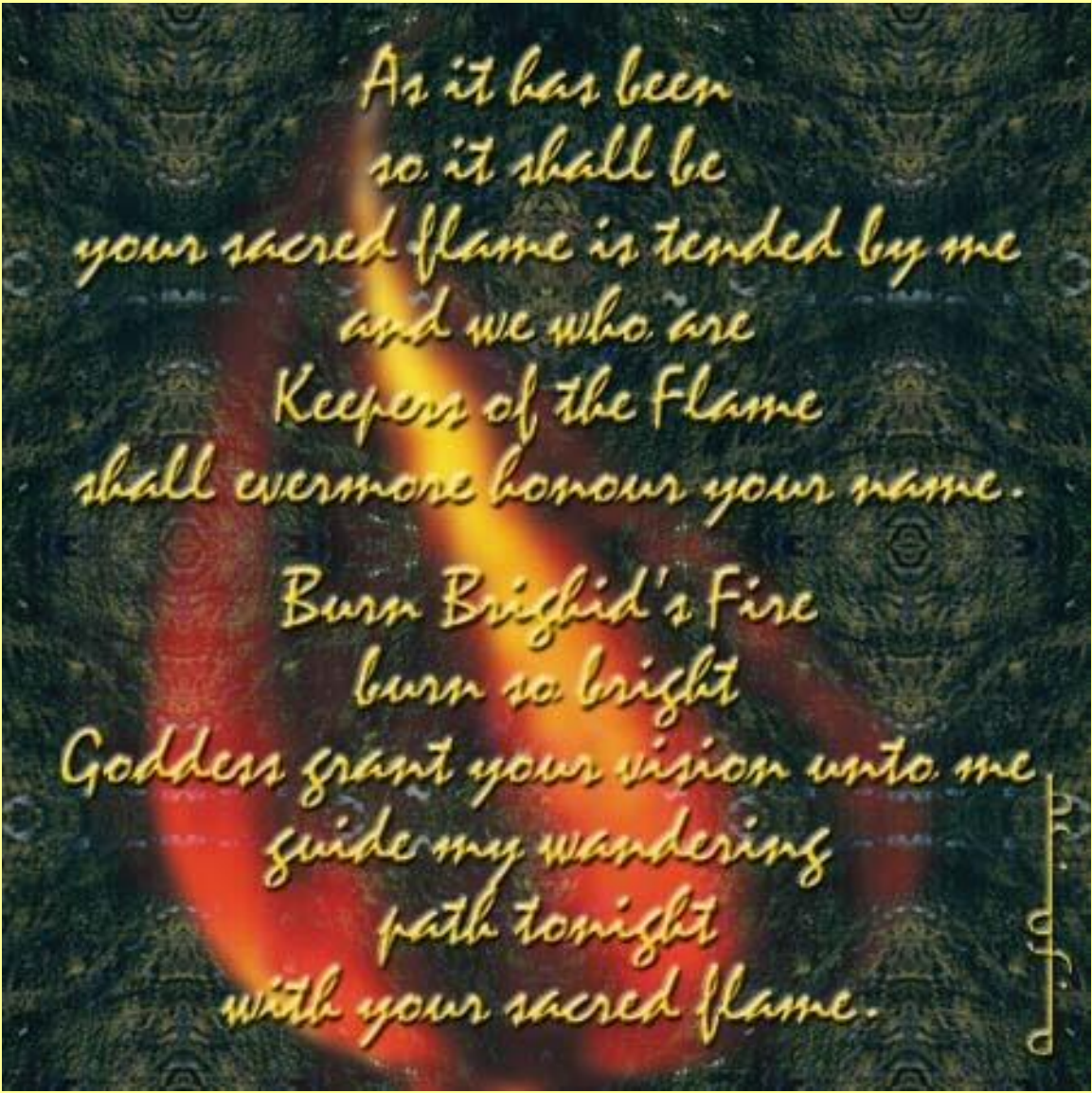
Brigid: Woman of Contemplation.

Celtic spirituality has a deep sense of the mystery and presence of God in everything and everyone. It fosters a contemplative approach to all creation. Brigid's life reflects this approach.



Brigid is an inspiring and assertive voice. A woman with the courage to speak out passionately for what she believed in with power and gentleness.

Brigid,
You *are* a woman of peace.
You *bring* harmony where there is conflict.
You *bring* light to the darkness.
You *bring* 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 *are* 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 and Blessed Be.



As it has been
so it shall be
your sacred flame is tended by me
and we who are
Keepers of the Flame
shall evermore honour your name.

Burn Brigid's Fire
burn so bright
Goddess grant your vision unto me
guide my wandering
path tonight
with your sacred flame.



Muir na nGael



May the blessing of light
be on you, light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight
Shine upon you and warm your heart till it glows like a great peat
fire, so that the stranger may
come and be warmed and also a friend.
And may the light shine out of the eyes of you,
like a candle set in the window of a house,
bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.
And may the blessing of the rain
be on you - the soft sweet rain;
May it fall upon your spirit so that all the little flowers
may spring up,
and shed their sweetness on the air.
And may the blessing of the great rains be on you,
may they beat upon your spirit and wash it fair and clean, and
leave there many a shining pool where the blue
of heaven shines, and sometimes a star.
And may the blessing of the earth
be on you - the great round earth;
May you ever have a kindly greeting
from them you pass as you're going along the roads.
May the earth be soft under you when
you rest upon it, tired at the end of a day,
and may it rest easy over you when,
at the last, you lie out under it.
May it rest so lightly over you that
your soul may be off from under it so quickly,
and up and off, and on it's way to God.
And now may the Lord (and Lady)
bless you and bless you kindly.