



## St Brigid – Feast Day, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb

### St. Brigid's Cross

St. Brigid, "Mary of the Gael", abbess and patroness of Ireland, and founder of the first Irish monastery in Kildare, was born near Dundalk in 450 A.D.

Tradition tells us that her unbounded charity drew multitudes of the poor to her door and much enraged her father Dubhtach, a Leinster pagan Chieftain and a stubborn disbeliever. As he lay on his deathbed, she sat by him and whiled away the time weaving a cross from the rushes at her feet. Her father asked her to explain it's meaning and was so overwhelmed that he became a Christian before his death.

Many believed that this rush cross, which became her emblem, keeps evil and hunger from the homes in which it is displayed. For centuries, it has been customary on the eve of her feast-day for the Irish to fashion a St. Brigid's Cross of straw or rushes and place it inside the house, over the door. St. Brigid's feast day falls on the first of February, the day on which she died in 524 A.D. Her body lies at Downpatrick beside the graves of St. Patrick and St. Columba.



The cross is made from rushes and tradition has it that the women who made them prayed for different people as they made each arm of the cross.

Each arm in turn represents:

- The people who have walked the path before you.
- The people you will meet on your path.
- For the healing of all who have gone before you
- For being reunited with our loved ones in the afterlife

*And*

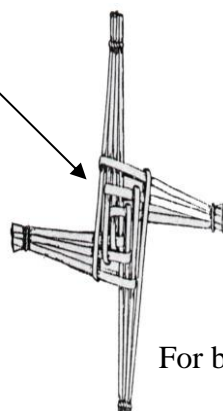
- All of these prayers are gathered weaved together in the centre, in the heart of Christ.

All are placed in the centre,  
the heart of Christ.

For the healing of generations past

For those you will meet on your path

For the people who have walked your path



For being reunited with all in the after life

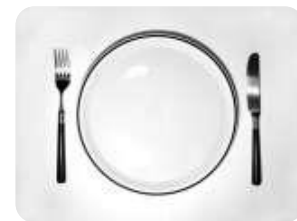
## St. Brigid's Word search

### Monastery

P B P  
A S Y O V A T  
H S L P E O R Y P I A  
W R E O E S K B G I F E N  
H P J C O N I O O L R X R A R  
E C S I H O O F O E C H W D Q  
B C E U L C T N K K N S O O N Y F  
U E L N A S S C E O D U L R E R V  
E C I L A H C N A L F A N Y R R E D V  
D K P I B C I Á M L T L A W U B T M D  
W E S C M H T L N S H O M E D T S C B  
T S M U G S L O S E U I L F S A A  
F E L L A A U L O C G S L O K N C  
H O O D N B C R A H S W K G O  
C C C R O Z P C T N I R O H M  
F R A M L U H H D O R O C  
E K L B H G A N N I B  
Y F O I C I S  
F H H

Ardagh Chalice	High Cross
Bangor	holy well
Book of Durrow	Iona
Book of Kells	Manuscript
Book of the Cathach	Missions
Bucket	Monastery
Bullán stone	Monastic school
Calf	St Brendan
Chess piece	
Clonmacnoise	
Colmcille	
Columbanus	
Copy	
Cow	
Derrynaflan Chalice	
Glendalough	

## St Brigid's Day Recipes



Like feast days throughout the world food is involved in the celebration of St. Brigid's life.

Colcannon, Boxy Cakes, Spiced Beef and St. Brigid's Oatcakes for the children were big favourites. You'll notice that the ingredients reflect the simplicity of the time and are easily found. To this day they are still favourites in many Irish homes.

Colcannon in particular was eaten in many Irish homes especially on Fridays when up to very recently meat wasn't eaten as part of religious observances.

### Colcannon (serves 6)

- 1 ½ lbs. Green Cabbage
- 2 cups water
- Knob of butter
- 1 ¼ lbs peeled and quartered potatoes
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1 cup cleaned and chopped leeks white part only
- 1 cup milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Butter Bomb (a ball of butter)



Simmer the cabbage in two cups water and oil for ten minutes, then drain, and chop fine. Boil potatoes and water, and simmer 'til tender. Simmer the leeks in milk for ten minutes 'til tender. Drain and puree the potatoes. Add leeks and their milk and the cooked cabbage, and mix in. Add the salt and pepper. Mound on a plate and bury the "butter bomb" in the middle of the mound. Garnish with parsley.

Our School Principal once told us that in his house there was a tradition of "hiding" money wrapped in tin-foil in the colcannon and you had to eat your way through the colcannon to find the cash. He thinks that this tradition wasn't very widespread but was his Mam's way of getting the kids to eat all that veg!! Clever woman!!

### St. Brigid's Oatcakes (serves 4)

- 2 cups uncooked, old-fashioned rolled oats (*not instant*)
- 1¼ cups buttermilk
- 2 ½ cups sifted bread flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Vegetable oil spray



A day ahead, combine the oats and buttermilk in a small bowl. Blend thoroughly, cover and refrigerate overnight. The next day, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F/180 degrees C. Remove the oat mixture from the refrigerator. Combine the bread flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Slowly add the oat mixture and stir with a wooden spoon 20 to 30 times, or until you have a smooth dough. Grease a baking sheet with the oil spray. Turn the dough onto the baking sheet, and use your hands to form a round, cake-shaped loaf about 1-inch thick. Use a sharp knife or pizza cutter to cut the dough into 4 quarters. Move the quarters apart slightly, but keep them in the original round shape. Bake until the cakes are light golden brown and firm to the touch, 30 to 35 minutes. Cool slightly on a rack, and serve with butter and jam or preserves. Makes 1 loaf (in quarters).

## Boxty Cakes (makes 12)

½ lb hot cooked potatoes  
½ lb grated raw potatoes  
2 cups flour, 1 teaspoon baking soda  
1½ cups buttermilk  
Butter for frying  
Salt and pepper



Drain, peel and mash the hot potatoes. Stir in the raw potatoes, flour and baking soda. Add salt and pepper to taste. Mix well with enough buttermilk to make a stiff batter. Shape into 3 inch patties about ¼ inch thick and fry on hot greased griddle until crispy and golden on both sides.

## Irish Spiced Beef

Brigid is closely associated with her red-eared cow and the farm and beef. While spiced beef is traditionally eaten on Christmas it goes with Brigid's day quite well. Takes a few days to prepare and cure properly!!



You'll need - 20 cloves of Garlic, 2 tsp ground allspice or cinnamon, 6 Shallots, 2 tsp Prague Powder (Curing Salt), 1 Pound Kosher Salt (coarse), 1 tsp. black pepper, three tsp. ground mace (or nutmeg), 7-8 lb. beef. 2-3 bay leaves, Two Pints Guinness /Stout.

Grind all dry ingredients and mix them well together. Add finely chopped shallots. Then rinse the beef and place in plastic or glass container (*avoid iron*). Split the spice/salt mixture into 7 equal amounts then take 1 seventh of the spice/salt mixture and rub it all over the meat. Place the meat back into container, cover and set in a cool spot-*if too warm out place in fridge*. Each day for seven days rub the meat with one seventh of the mixture, turn over and re-cover. Leave the liquid that forms with the meat. At the end of seven days place meat and liquid into a big pot -add water to top up and cover the meat and boil until the meat is tender, (*a fork should just barely be able to lift up strands of meat- don't over do it!*) Change water adding clean water and boil for another 30 minutes. Then add veg-large carrots, onions, and potatoes- cook until almost done. Add two pints of Guinness and boil for another 10-20 minutes.

You can eat this hot or leave to cool overnight-place meat into colander with weight on it and plate or dish under it. Enjoy!!

## Some other Simple Ideas!!

**Butter Making:** Fresh butter was traditionally churned on St. Brigid's Day. To make some with children, simply place a clean marble in a baby food jar and pour in some room temperature full cream. Screw the cap on the jar, shake vigorously for five minutes or so until you get passed the whipped cream stage. Then, pour out the liquid and enjoy the butter left behind.

**Charity Baskets:** Traditionally, wealthier farmers gave mutton, fowl and pork away to poorer neighbours on St. Brigid's Day. St. Brigid herself was also known for great charity. Model this by having a playdate for your children's friends and ask all playdate attendees bring food items. Then, together, decorate a food basket and make cards to be dropped off at a local homeless shelter. Alternately, since St. Brigid is patron to babies, have each playdate attendee bring a baby shower item, such as clothing, rattles or blankets. Put these together in a basket to give to a local maternity hospital or local children's charity.

**Nature Walk:** "St. Brigid loved to wander the woods befriending the animals," go on a nature walk together, perhaps leaving a trail of bird seed or other food that animals at this time of year might appreciate.

## St Brigid and the Fox

Brigid had a wonderful way with animals. One day a friend of the monastery workmen came to her with a sad tale that the friend had accidentally killed the king of Leinster's pet fox, thinking that it was a wild animal. The man was arrested. His wife and children begged the king to spare his life to no avail. The workman asked Brigid to intercede.

Although Brigid loved animals, she thought it silly that a man's life should be demanded in return for the fox's, so she set out for the court. The way lay through a wood, where the road was a mere track and the horse had to walk. Brigid prayed for the right words to speak to the angry king to save the life of the woodsman.



Suddenly she saw a little fox peeping shyly at her around a tree and she had an idea. She told the driver to stop and called the animal to her. Immediately it sprang into the car beside her and nestled happily in the folds of her cloak. Brigid stroked its head and spoke to it gently. The little fox licked her hand and looked at her adoringly.

When she reached the king's castle, the fox trotted after her. She found the ruler still in a mighty rage. "Nothing," he told her angrily, "nothing in the world could make up to me for the loss of my beloved pet. Death is too good for that idiot of a workman. He must die as a warning to others like him. Let him die."

The king stormed on, "It is no use whining to me about mercy. That little fox was my companion, even my friend. It was brutally killed for no reason. What harm did I do to that man? Do you have any notion how much I loved my little fox that I have cared for ever since it was born?"

The king's furious eyes met Brigid's loving ones. Yes, indeed, she could well understand it. She was truly sorry for his loss for she, too, loved all animals and especially tame little foxes. Look here . . . she beckoned forward her new pet from the woods that had been crouching behind her.

The king forgot his anger in this new interest. He and his household looked on delightedly while Brigid proceeded to put the fox through all kinds of clever tricks. It obeyed her voice and tried so hard to please her that the onlookers were greatly entertained. Soon she was surrounded by laughing faces.

The king told her what his own little fox used to do. "See, it used to jump through this hoop, even at this height." But so could Brigid's at her first sign of command! When the king's fox wanted a titbit, it used to stand on its hind legs with its fore paws joined as though it were praying . . . why, so could Brigid's! Could anything be more amusing? When his mood had completely changed, Brigid offered her fox to the king in exchange for the prisoner's life. Now the king smilingly agreed and he even promised Brigid that never again would he inflict any kind of punishment on that workman, whose misdeed he would forget.

Brigid was very happy when the prisoner was restored to his wife and children. She went back home thanking God.

But the little fox missed her sorely and became restless and unhappy. It did not care where Brigid led him but, without her, the castle was a prison. After a while the king left on business and no one else bothered much about the new pet. The fox watched for its chance and when it found an open door, it made good its escape back to the woods.

The king returned and there was commotion when the pet was missed. The whole household was sent flying out to search for it. When they failed, the king's hounds were sent to help in the search, their keen noses snuffing over the ground for the fox's scent. Then the excited king summoned out his whole army, both horsemen and footmen, to follow the hounds in every direction. But it was all no use. When night fell, the hosts of Leinster returned wearily to their king with news of failure. Brigid's little pet fox was never found again.

Draw and colour St. Brigid and the fox. Give a title to your drawing.



## "The Giveaway" - a poem about St. Brigid

(from *The Love Letters of Phyllis McGinley*, New York, Viking Press, 1957)

Saint Bridget was a problem child.  
Although a lass demure and mild,  
And one who strove to please her dad,  
Saint Bridget drove the family mad.  
For here's the fault in Bridget lay:  
She *would* give everything away.

To any soul whose luck was out  
She'd give her bowl of stir-about;  
She'd give her shawl, divide her purse  
With one or all. And what was worse,  
When she ran out of things to give  
She'd borrow from a relative.

Her father's gold, her grandsire's  
dinner,  
She'd hand to cold and hungry sinner;  
Give wine, give meat, no matter whose;  
Take from her feet the very shoes,  
And when her shoes had gone to  
others,  
Fetch forth her sister's and her  
mother's.

She could not quit. She had to share;  
Gave bit by bit - The silverware,  
The barnyard geese, The parlour rug,  
Her little niece's christening mug,  
Even her bed to those in want,  
And then the mattress of her aunt.

An easy touch for poor and lowly,  
She gave so much and grew so holy  
That when she died of years and fame,  
The countryside put on her name,  
And still the Isles of Erin fidget  
With generous girls named Bride or  
Bridget.

Well, one must love her. Nonetheless,  
In thinking of her giving-ness,  
There's no denial she must have been  
A sort of trial, unto her kin.

The moral, too, seems rather quaint.  
*Who* had the patience of a saint,  
From evidence presented here?  
Saint Bridget? Or her near and dear?

### A Simple Activity

Having read the poem, grab a few simple props and see if you could be inspired to make up a little play inspired by this!!

## CLOAK

See if you can find out more about this story!!

Brigid removed her cloak and laid it on the ground. Then to the absolute amazement of everyone watching, the cloak began to grow. It grew and grew. It stretched all round at once, stretching itself out. Startled the king jumped back. The cloak was like a living thing.



## SAINTS FUN FACTS

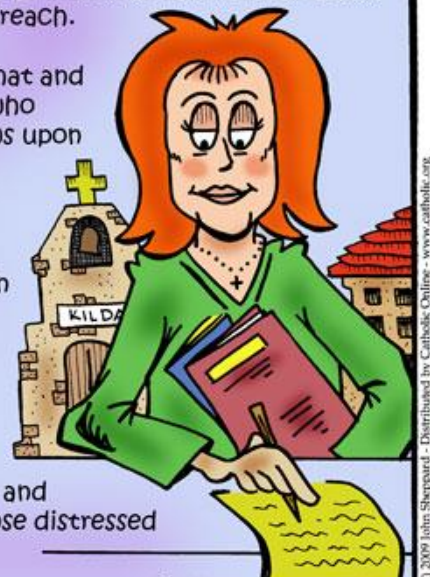
by John Sheppard

Brigid was raised by Druids in Ireland and as a child heard St. Patrick preach.

She never forgot that and it was St. Patrick who heard her final vows upon entering into the convent.

She founded a double monastery in Kildare, an art school and many convents all over Ireland.

Her extraordinary spirituality, charity and compassion for those distressed were legendary.



SHEPPARD

## St Brigid's Holy Well – Clondalkin

*This well is about 200 yds from the Boot road, a road which leads from Clondalkin on the south west side, to the Naas road.*

Legend has it that St. Brigid came to the site of the monastery at Clondalkin and baptised pagans at the well on Boot Road. The structure around it dates from 1761. The original railings were donated by the workers in the Paper Mills in the 1940s and the statue was given by Mary O'Toole. In the 1950s four local men, Paddy Lyons, Jimmy Gallaher, Paddy Mathis and Paddy Kelly restored the well and constructed the grotto that houses the statue. About this time there were processions to the well on the 1st February each year, the feast day of St. Bridget. The well is believed to have curative powers. A piece of rag dipped in the water and used to wipe the face, particularly of young girls, was said to cure eye complaints. After use the rag (or Cloutie) would be hung on an adjoining tree. Then seven Hail Marys, seven Our Fathers and seven Glory be to the Father was then recited each day for seven days. Community pride in the renovation of the well brought about an increased devotion to St Bridget.

After dark on St Bridget's day the community gathered at the well, lighted candles in hand, they sang hymns and recited the Rosary. This tradition continued into the very early 60s.

Another major event in the life of the well at this time was the erecting of an iron cross to St Bridget. This was erected by a Mr and Mrs Doyle from Dublin on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. Two further

crosses was erected by this couple, one to St. Patrick on the north side another to St. Colmcille in the Dublin hills

The well was restored by South Dublin County Council in 1995.



**Make sure you make a point of visiting the Well on or around  
St Brigid's Feast day – February 1st!!**