

Saint of the Week: Brigid of Kildare (c. 451-525)

Observed 1 February

Saint Brigid's name is known in many forms including Bride, Brid, Brigit, Bridgit, and Bridget is the female member of Ireland's triad of Patron Saints (along with Patrick and Columba). Daughter of a prominent Druid family, Brigid was born in the middle of the 5th century, while Saint Patrick was still actively converting the Irish people. Her father gave her a powerful name in their tradition for Brigid was the goddess of healing, inspiration, craftsmanship and poetry. Her personality and lifetime of work were worthy of such a name and she proved to be a strong-willed child. Brigid was particularly noted for her generosity, dismaying her father by her impulses to give everything to the poor, regardless of his instruction. He was adamantly opposed when she, inspired by the preaching of Saint Patrick and his followers, wished to become a Christian and a nun. Like many Druids she felt that her former faith was a partial understanding of the nature of God, which was completed by the Christian Gospel. Her father's opposition abated when he saw that indeed her basic impulses were much better suited to the life of a nun than to life in his family. So Brigid became a nun and joined with several other similar women to establish



several convents. Her most famous establishment was a double monastery at Kildare where the Druids had traditionally kept a perpetual sacred fire. In keeping with most evangelism in the British Isles, they did not destroy the fire, but instead reinterpreted it. They maintained a tradition valued for generations, while using it to reinforce the teachings of Christianity. A double monastery (men on one side, women on the other) was common in the Celtic church, although not usual elsewhere. As Abbess of Kildare, Brigid was included in many key meetings of Irish church leaders over key decades in the establishment of the style, policies, and practices of Irish Christianity. At her death, Brigid (already widely regarded as a saint) was buried before the high altar of her abbey church, but not long after her remains were taken from that tomb to Downpatrick where she was buried with Ireland's other two patrons.

Lessons I Corinthians 1:26-31; Psalm 1; Matthew 6:25-33

Collect Everliving God, we rejoice today in the fellowship of your blessed servant Brigid, and give you thanks for her life of devoted service. Inspire us with life and light, and give us perseverance to serve you all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*