

**St. Brigid
(Ireland) 453-523**

*She and her nuns included the care of the sick,
particularly lepers, among their function.
Patron saint of Ireland after St. Patrick*



Brigid was believed to be born near Dundalk, Ireland in 453 A.D. to a powerful pagan Chieftain named Dubthach and a Christian woman named Brocca. Her mother had been born free in Portugal, captured by Irish pirates and sold into slavery, so Brigid was also born a slave. She was named after the pagan goddess of fire, the most powerful pagan goddess of her father's pagan religion.

Her father arranged a marriage between Brigid and a bard but she refused desiring instead to devote herself to Our Lord. She established the first monastery in Ireland in Kildare in 470 A.D. securing land from the King through a miraculous enlargement of her cloak. The king had promised to give her as much land as her cloak would cover. She established monasteries to house both men and women. She served as abbess.¹ She founded schools of art,

metalwork, and illumination of manuscripts including the famous Book of Kildare.

There is a peculiar cross woven of reeds that bears the name the "St. Brigid Cross." The story behind this is that:

An old pagan chieftan lay delirious on his deathbed in Kildare. In some versions of the story this chieftan is her father. His servants summoned Brigid to his bedside, in the hope this saintly woman might be able to calm his restless spirit. As she sat by his bedside, trying to calm and console him, she picked up some of the rushes which were strewn across the floor of the room. As her fingers played with the dry strands, she started weaving them together, eventually forming a cross. As she worked she explained the meaning of the cross to the sick man. Her calming words brought peace to his soul. The chieftan's fever broke, and he grew quiet. Captivated by her lesson of love and enlightenment, the old chieftan was baptized as a Christian, just before his death.²

St. Brigid was close friends with St. Patrick with whom she worked to convert the pagans. She and her nuns included the care of the sick, particularly lepers, among their function.³ She is the patron saint of Ireland, after St. Patrick, and patroness of healers, midwives and newborn babies. Feast Day - February 1.

References:

1) Hagiography Circle. 1 February. Accessed 10 May 2023.
<http://newsaints.faithweb.com/martyrology/February/01.htm>

2) Irish American Mom (2013). The Story of the Saint Brigid's Cross. Accessed 10 May 2023.
<https://www.irishamericanmom.com/the-story-of-the-saint-brigids-cross/>

3) Ethel Corduff (2021). Ireland's Loss Britain's Gain: Irish Nurses in Britain from Nightingale to Millennium. South Croydon, Ireland: Rainbow Valley Books. <https://rainbowvalleybooks.com/irish-nurses-in-britain>

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls. May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka