

PRAYING WITH THE CELTIC SAINTS



SAINT BRIGID OF KILDARE



We light this candle because Christ is the Light no darkness can extinguish

Apart, but united in your Spirit we come :

**We come into the presence of the joyful Birther,
we come into the presence of the rising Son.
We come into the presence of the life-giving Spirit,
we come into the presence of the Three-in-One.**

We come before you, Lord, to praise you, to thank you and to worship you.
Grant us, we pray, new understanding of that which you desire to do through us.
Lord Jesus, as we come to you,
so come to us. **Amen.**

A Mid-Wife of the Faith

The ever-excellent woman,
the brilliant, sparkling flame;
the bird alert on the cliff-edge,
the healer of sick and lame.
She never was half-hearted
about the love of God;
she never craved for profit,
but loved her bounteous Lord.
A mid-wife of the faith was she,
a farm worker and nun,
all glory gave she to her Friend
and we praise the Three-in-One.



SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25 : 31 - 40

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 5 : 7

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.

THE LIFE OF SAINT BRIGID

Brigid of Kildare is the perfect saint to pray with during this week of Christian Aid : she chose the beatitude of mercy as her motto through life – she lived a life of self-sacrifice, serving the poor and hungry. Brigid believed deeply that the poor belonged to the Great Family, whose Father was God. They were her brothers and sisters, to whom she offered physical and spiritual care. When asked why she helped the poor, St Brigid allegedly replied,

‘Christ is in the person of every poor person who believes..... I find it hard to deny Christ his own food.’

Born in Ireland around 455AD, Brigid was a contemporary of St Patrick. The seeds of faith that Patrick sowed in Ireland, Brigid nurtured and she became known as ‘the mid-wife of the faith’. Her life was marked by exceptional generosity, compassion, energy and love of justice. Famous for her ability to heal, many miracles are attributed to her.

Brigid’s whole life seems to have involved crossing boundaries. She was born on the boundary of paganism and Christianity : her mother was a Christian slave girl, made pregnant by her master. His wife made him sell the girl to a Druid and she gave birth to Brigid as she crossed the threshold of his home. This is symbolic, as Ireland was on the threshold of becoming Christian.

Brigid stood on the boundary of material and spiritual wealth. Her generosity in both was renowned. She worked on her father’s farm, tending the dairy herd. It is said that one day, she gave away all the butter she had churned to the poor, but God replenished it. This can be equated with the inexhaustible ‘milk of human kindness’ that governed her life. Brigid would give away her father’s possessions to anyone who came to the door in need. Exasperated, he resolved to give her in marriage to a local chieftain. Left outside while he went to speak with him, she gave away his favourite sword and jewel-encrusted scabbard to a leper. When questioned by the chieftain about the sword, she is said to have responded,



‘Jesus knows, if I had your wealth, My Lord, I would give it all to God!’

He decided she was not the wife for him and her father finally allowed her to follow her heart and become a nun.

She stood on the boundary of gender equality: As she waited in line to take the veil, the bishop saw a fiery pillar above her head (the sign of a bishop). By mistake, he read the wrong words of initiation and made her a bishop! Other priests objected because she was a woman, but the bishop responded, 'I have no power. That dignity has already been given her by God!' During her lifetime, she founded many churches, but the most famous was the convent she established at Kildare. It became known as 'The City of the Poor' because of her great hospitality to all. Kildare means 'of the oak' and undoubtedly, it was built on a druidic site. There, she lit a fire and the task of maintaining the flame (of Christ) was given to 20 nuns, including herself. After she died, 19 nuns kept the flame alive for a thousand years, until the dissolution of the monasteries.

Many legends surround the life of St Brigid, but perhaps the most famous is that concerning 'Brigid's cross': as she was attending a dying pagan chieftain, she began plaiting some reeds into a cross as she prayed. When the king asked what she was doing, she spoke to him of her faith and the meaning of the cross. The chieftain was baptised and died a Christian. In parts of Ireland, it remains customary on St Brigid's day (1st February) to plait a cross and put it on the doorpost. The following year, that cross is moved to the stable, a new one replacing it and the year after it's buried into the farmland and so the rotation goes on, Brigid thus blessing the home, the animals and the crops.

REFLECTION

Brigid made a cross as she prayed. She wove simple reeds into a new form – a richer and more beautiful creation. God, too, works patiently and persistently with the reeds of our lives. He invites us to offer him the shreds of our suffering and the stuff of our dreams, our faith and our love, that he might make of us a new creation.

Let's spend some time in prayer, offering ourselves to God - offering the separate strands of our lives. Let's ask God's grace to see the whole of which we are a part – to see the tapestry God is weaving as he calls us beyond our aloneness into his Family. As he invites us to call him 'Abba', Father and to love our brothers and sisters as ourselves.



A Prayer of St Brigid

Mary's Son, my friend, come and bless the kitchen.

May we have fullness through you.

Mary's Son, my friend, come and bless the work.

May we have fullness through you.

Mary's Son, my friend, come and bless the soil.

May we have fullness through you.

Mary's Son, my friend, come and bless those for whom we pray

May they have fullness through you.

Amen.

OUR PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD



Loving Lord, set us free, to cross boundaries for you,
as you crossed boundaries for us.

Spirit of God, make us open to others in listening, generous to others in giving
and sensitive to others in praying, as we now bring before you those people and
situations that are on our hearts, trusting that you hear us and use our prayers in
the mystery of healing

Come, Lord Jesus, hear our prayer ...

We pray for those living in fear, in hardship, sickness and danger due to this
pandemic. We name before you those in special need at this time

Lord, may they have fullness through you...

Remembering that you have woven us into one family, we pray for our brothers
and sisters across the world who were suffering before this pandemic and who

suffer even more now. We pray for the people of Gaza, Yemen and Syria, where hospitals, doctors and medicines are in desperately short supply.

Lord, may they have fullness through you....

We pray for refugees across the world, living in tented camps and insanitary conditions and now with Corona virus.

We remember those who are so desperate that they risk and lose their lives trying to find a better one for their families

Lord, may they have fullness through you

St Brigid was renowned as a healer. We pray your healing now Lord for those whom we name before you

Lord, may they have fullness through you

We remember those who have died and pray your eternal rest and peace for them. We ask the comfort of your promises for those who mourn. May they know the reality of your presence

Lord, may they have fullness through you

Give us the faith of Saint Brigid to cross boundaries for you, to share what we have and to bring healing and reconciliation into all of our relationships.

Lord, may we have fullness through you ..

These prayers we humbly offer in the name of our Lord and Saviour,
Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

**Today and always, may we:
Look upon each person with the eyes of Christ.
Speak to each person with the words of Christ
and love each person in the strength of Christ.
In Love's name, the Three-in-One.**

Amen.

