

The Story of St. Brigid

St. Brigid was born around 450AD in Faughart, a few miles north of Dundalk in Co. Louth. Her father was a pagan chieftain who was called Dubhtach, who lived on a big farm. Her mother, Brocca, was a Christian slave who was baptised by St. Patrick.

Brigid was a very generous, kind and caring person. When she was a teenager she helped to look after her father's house and she often gave away much of their food and clothes to people who needed them. Locally, Brigid was known for her generosity to the poor, and one story tells how, as a child, she once gave away her mother's whole store of butter. Knowing that this would get her into trouble she prayed to God that the butter would be replenished and her prayers were heard.

She decided to give her life to God as a nun, and with seven other young women she founded a convent in Kildare. She needed land to build her convent and church, so she went to the King of Leinster and asked for some land. The King said he would only give her the land that her cloak would cover. Brigid agreed. The cloak grew and grew and spread over a few acres of land. Here, Brigid built her church and convent. The name Kildare means '*church of the oak*'.

It is likely that the pagans worshipped here and Brigid wanted it to be a Christian place of worship. It is said that there was a fire in Kildare which was kept burning by the pagans to pagan gods. Brigid used this custom and the light of the fire came to be known and understood as the Light of Christ. The flame of Brigid or *Solas Bride* still burns in Kildare today. Brigid died around 525 and Kildare was a place of learning, prayer and worship. She certainly sowed the seeds of God's love there.

It is believed that Brigid travelled around Ireland in a chariot. She is given the credit of healing people and restoring speech to those who could not talk. There are lots of stories of how she loved and cared for animals.

Perhaps the best known story is of her visit to a dying pagan chieftain. While she prayed, she took rushes from the floor and wove them into a cross. While she was weaving she told the chieftain all about Jesus and how he had died on the cross. While she was weaving she told the chieftain all about Jesus and how he had died on the cross. The chieftain was baptised and became a Christian before he died. Brigid's crosses are made each St. Brigid's Day. People like to hang the crosses in their homes and sheds to protect themselves and their animals from harm.

St. Brigid is one of the three Patron Saints of Ireland, along with St. Patrick and St. Columcille.