

***Schools* Learn more about the story of St Brigid**

Saint Brigid of Kildare, also known as Naomh Bhríde or Mary of the Gaels, lived from 451 to 525. She was an Irish nun, abbess, founder of several convents, and so great and powerful was the wisdom and influence of Saint Brigid, that she is one of the few abbesses to be ordained and consecrated a Bishop by Bishop Saint Mel in Telcha Mide, an honour not usually conferred upon women.

St Brigit, whose feast day falls on February 1st was also a negotiator, peacemaker and early community activist. Just the kind of person we need now. Her feast day, coincides with the pre-Christian festival of Imbolc, announcing the arrival of new life. The whole month of February is called Mí na Féile Bríde (Month of the Festival of Brigit).

One aspect of Brigit seldom receives attention: Brigit the Weaver. Her cross was made of newly plucked rushes; her crios (girdle or belt), of new straw; and her cloak was of woven material. Brigit was also a “peace weaver”, the name given to distinguished women in Old European times. Such women had great negotiating skills and authority.

As with such peace weavers, St Brigit caused mists to appear between opposing sides in order to prevent bloodshed. With her nuns she accompanied protesting warriors to the battlefield, rendering them unable to fight. In historical times, the Abbesses of Kildare, who succeeded the historical 5th century Brigit, could pardon criminals encountered on their way to execution. They were revered figures of authority who were known as “Those Who Turned Back the Streams of War”.

Today’s weavers and nurturers – community activists, parents, carers, and educators – continue to weave webs of peace and justice. Like community activists and nurturers, Brigit wove the fragile threads of life into webs of community. Her passion for justice rings through her life. Her Life Story recounts 23 stories that show her concern and generosity for the poor.

Today, the old religious and political structures have crashed all around us. In any new arrangements peace weavers and nurturers must be represented and their voices heard, loud and clear. No better woman than Brigit to inspire us.

Based on an article by Mary Condren, published in The Irish Times - Monday, January 31, 2011

Justice Dates for February

- February 4th marks Afri’s annual Féile Bríde, which this year celebrates Fire and Food. The celebration will take place in Derby House Hotel, Kildare Town. See www.afri.ie
- On February 15th DDCI launch their public report card on Ireland, The Global South and the International Financial Institutions. See www.debtireland.org