



St. Brigid of Ireland

February 1

St. Brigid, “the Mary of the Gael,” was born around 450 in Faughart, about two miles from Dundalk, in County Louth, Ireland. According to tradition, her father was a pagan named Dubthach, and her mother was Brocessa, one of his slaves.

As a child, Brigid was known for her compassion for the poor. She would give away food, clothing, and even her father’s possessions. One day, her father took Brigid to the king’s court, leaving her outside to wait for him. He asked the king to buy his daughter, since her excessive generosity made her too expensive to keep. The king asked to see the girl, so Dubthach led him outside. They were just in time to see her give away her father’s sword to a beggar. This sword had earlier been presented to Dubthach by the king. Seeing her actions, the king exclaimed, “I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap!”

St. Brigid received monastic tonsure at the hands of St. Mael of Ardagh. Soon after this, she established a monastery on land given to her by the King of Leinster. The land was called Cill Dara (Kildare), or “the church of the oak.” This was the beginning of women’s cenobitic monasticism in Ireland.

The miracles performed by St. Brigid are too numerous to relate, so only one will be given. One evening, the holy abbess was sitting with a blind nun named Dara. From sunset to sunrise, they spoke of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the love of Christ, losing all track of time. St. Brigid was struck by the beauty of the earth and sky in the morning light. Realizing that Sister Dara was unable to appreciate this beauty, she became very sad. Then she prayed and made the Sign of the Cross over Dara’s eyes. All at once, the blind nun’s eyes were opened and she saw the sun in the east, and the trees and flowers sparkled with dew. She looked for a while, then turned to St. Brigid and said, “Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is visible to the eyes, then God is seen less clearly by the soul.” St. Brigid prayed again, and Dara became blind once more.

St. Brigid fell asleep in the Lord in 523 after receiving Holy Communion from St. Ninnidh of Inismacsaint. She was buried at Kildare, but her relics were transferred to Downpatrick during the Viking invasions. It is believed that she was buried in the same grave with St. Patrick and St. Columba of Iona.¹

¹ www.antiochian.org