

# An Introduction to Brigid

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# What will we cover?

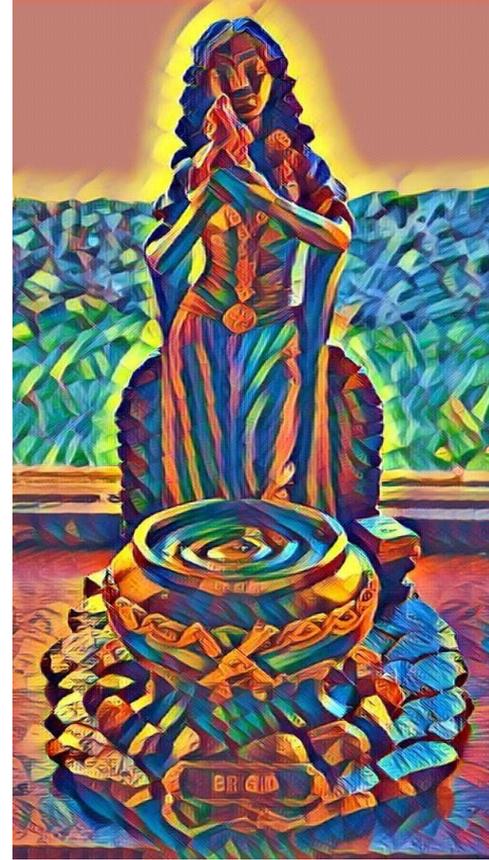
Pronunciation & spelling

Who is Brigid?

Practices and customs

Practical Exercise

Personal gnosis and practices



# Pronunciation and spelling

Brig

Bric

Brigid

Brigit

Brighid

Bríd

Bridget

Who is Brigid?

Family Tree

Cath Maige Tuired

Cormac's Glossary, Daughter(s) of the Dagda

The Law Givers

The Saint, the Abbess, the Christian times

Personal gnosis and practices

# Family tree

Daughter(s) of the Dagda

No mother!!

Brothers: Aengus Óg, Aed, Cermait

Ruadán (Bres' son, half Formorian, Caith Maigh Tuired)

Sons of Tuireann (Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba)

# Cath Maige Tuired

## ***Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired (Author:[unknown]) section 125***

*But after the spear had been given to him, Rúadán turned and wounded Goibniu. He pulled out the spear and hurled it at Rúadán so that it went through him; and he died in his father's presence in the Fomorian assembly. Bríg came and keened for her son. At first she shrieked, in the end she wept. Then for the first time weeping and shrieking were heard in Ireland. (Now she is the Bríg who invented a whistle for signalling at night.)*

# Caith Maige Tuired

Communication

Grief

Mother

# Daughter(s) of the Dagda

“Brigit the poetess, daughter of the Dagda, she had Fe and Men, the two royal oxen, from whom Femen is named. She had Triath, king of her boars, from whom Treithirne is named. With them were, and were heard, the three demoniac shouts after rapine in Ireland, whistling and weeping and lamentation.” (source: Macalister, LGE, Vol. 4, p. 159, 308)

# Cormac's Glossary

**Brigit** .i. banfhile ingen inDag dai. iseiside Brigit baneceas (no be neicsi) .i. Brigit bandee noadradís filid. arba romor & baroán afrithgnam. isairesin ideo eam (deam) vocant poetarum hoc nomine cujus sorores erant Brigit be legis Brigit bé goibnechta .i. bandé .i. trihingena inDag dai insin. De quarum nominibus pene omnes Hibernenses dea Brigit vocabatur. Brigit din .i. breoaigit no breoshaigit.

*Brigid, poet, daughter of the Dagda. Brigid is a woman of poetry, the Goddess the poets worshipped, because her protection was very great and well known. Her sisters were Brigid, the woman of healing and Brigid, the woman of smithcraft. Of these names almost all the Irish goddesses were called Brigid. Brigid then from “breoaigit” or “breoshaigit” (fiery arrow)*

*(This translation comes from Morgan Daimler's book!)*

# Daughters of the Dagda

Brigid the Healer - hearth fire: reiki, reflexology, womb blessing

Brigid the Smith - smith fire: engineering

Brigid the Poet - muse fire: creative writing, devotionals

# Leabhar Gabala Éireann

The family of the Dagda are associated with fire. “Most likely In Dagda himself was a fire-, or perhaps a storm-divinity.” Ord son of the Dagda whose name means ‘fire’. Brigid daughter of the Dagda was a fire-goddess. (source: Macalister, LGE, Vol. 4, p. 102)

# The Law Givers - Mother

*All related to Senchan, the chief poet and judge of the Ulster court*

Brig Brigiú - Brigid the Hospitaller, his mother

“Brigiú” - wealthy landowner, obliged to provide food and shelter (like a hostel)

Often served as mediators and judges

Hostels were often Otherworldly, or Otherworld-adjacent in the stories

# The Law Givers - The Wife

Brig Brethach - Brigid of the Judgements, his wife

Linked to fairness to women in judgements (one judge had blisters raised on his face after giving a false judgement to a woman)

Linked to fosterage - her husband is the foster father of Cú Chulainn, one of the great Ulster heroes, a link to the saint being the Foster Mother of Christ?

# The Law Givers - the Daughter

Brig Ambue - Brigid of the Cowless, his daughter

Legal judgements again, but this time those on the fringes of society, those that were cowless, without land, property or family. Foreigners

Links to the Fian - those warriors, young, landless, cowless

# The Saint

Born to Dubhthach mac Dreimne and a slave called Broicseach

Dubhtach's wife, Breachnat, not too happy!!

Brigid's greatness was proclaimed by both druid and bishop (Mel and Melchu), as well as a poet at the court of King Conaill

Brigid's first healing was the son of King Conaill who was born dead, but when Brigid was brought to him, he breathed again

# The Saint - Liminality

Born at the rising of the sun

Her mother had one foot inside the house, one foot outside the house

Born on a Wednesday, 8th day of the moon, at Fochairt Mhuirthemhne (Faughart, Co. Louth, near Dundalk)

# The Saint - Otherworldly Happenings

The house on fire! But not consumed

Fed on the milk of a red-eared cow (sure sign of a beast from the Otherworld)

Numerous stories of her feeding far more people than expected from what was available

Healing potions - that tasted of beer!

Hung her cloak on a sunbeam

Cured the lepers - but then gave one back his leprosy for lack of generosity

# The Saint - practical happenings

Accidentally ordained a bishop instead of a nun

Founded the abbey at Kildare

First (recorded) abortionist in Ireland

Eternal flame - kept within hedges, no man could enter

Plucked out her own eye rather than marry someone - stood up to her brothers & father to do so

Foster-Mother of Christ, midwife to Mary

One of Ireland's three patron saints (the other two are Patrick and Colmcille)

# Imbolc

Imbolc - in the tummy

Time of the year for new life, seeds planted, lambing season, cleaning out after the winter

Cleansing the home, clearing the boundaries, preparing for new life, new growth

Feb 1st - St Brigid's Day

Feb 2nd - Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple, but prior to Vatican II, this was the Purification of Our Lady, also called Candlemas

# Imbolc practices

Brat Bhríde - Brigid's cloak, a piece of cloth left out overnight on the 31st January or the 1st February, so that Brigid might bless it as she passes - this then serves as a healing cloth throughout the year. Some customs say the same cloth should be used for seven years, others mention no time limits

Brigid's cross - there are plenty of Youtube videos and other tutorials to show you how to make a Brigid's cross. Many different types, depending on the area, but the most commonly taught in Irish schools is the 4 armed cross. Traditionally made with rushes, can be made from anything that bends in two!

# Imbolc Practices

Brídeog - a doll like figure, traditionally dressed in white, made on January 31st and laid by the fire in the house to welcome Brigid in

Brigid's bed - the bed to put the Brídeog in, but sometimes left empty to welcome the saint/deity herself to stop and spend the night

Ashes on the hearth - traditionally, ashes would be spread near the bed so that footsteps could be seen if the saint/deity visited in the night

For fishermen - placing shellfish around the house on Brigid's Day was seen as a means of protection from drowning and good luck in fishing in the coming year

# Imbolc practices

Leaving out on the doorstep a sheaf of corn, or a cake or both - this was to allow the saint/ deity to bless the food for the coming year and to ensure there was plenty of it! (before the spud arrived in Ireland, corn was the chief crop)

After the potato arrived, it too was included in the rituals and the potato left out on Brigid's eve was cut up into small pieces and planted with the rest of the crop - once Brigid had passed and blessed the item, it would then protect the crop from disease and encourage a good harvest

# Imbolc practices

Divination - a cord hung outside the house for the night was measured before and after. If it was longer afterwards, good luck would follow the family for the year.

Candles were made from the rushes left over from making the crosses and one assigned to every member of the family. The first one to go out was the first one to die (this story is from Leitrim, although my Dad remembers this happening at home on New Year's Eve in his childhood)

Practices to show people who they might marry - if a young man made a small ladder from rushes and gave it to a young woman to put under her pillow, she would dream of her future husband. For the young men, they needed a spinning-wheel from a young woman for the same effect.

# My own practices

Cleaning the house

Walking the bounds and grounds

Brigid's cross

Declutter mind and possession

Prepare to plant and grow the seeds that were prepared at Samhain

Look in the mirror and see if you like what you see

Protection ritual

- Crystal layout
- Mixture of water, salt, blood (for iron) with incense

# Protection for the house and home

*I call upon Brigid in the east, the power of air. You taught us to whistle in the night, may you guide all who lodge here and live here safely home in the night and protect us from that which we need protection.*

*I call upon Brigid in the south, the power of fire. You worked in the forge and tempered the metal. May you not temper us so much we shatter and protect us from others who would shatter us.*

*I call upon Brigid in the west, the power of water. Your healing waters are renowned, you healed your mother with the strength imbued in the water. Help us to heal what needs healing and prevent us from drowning under the weight of our obligations.*

*I call upon Brigid in the north, the power of earth. You walked this earth with us - offer us the solid foundation we need to live our lives or help us develop that foundation and change it as our needs change. Keep us safe on this earth and may we always recognise it is our eventual home.*

# Healing

Reiki, reflexology, womb blessing

Healing the land

Sea water

Fertility



Midwife to Mary, Foster-Mother of Christ

Imbolc, time of new growth, blessing of the crops

My menstrual practices, blood that heals

# Engineering (smith craft)

Daily life

Career

Visibility

Activism

Mentor and guide



# Creative writing and devotionals (poetry)

Journalling

Stories

Teaching

Devotionals



# Sanctuary

My home as my sanctuary

My home as sanctuary to others

My home is under my protection (and hers!)

(Brigid's links to warriors through the forge and Brig Ambue)

# Brigid and fertility, menstruation

Midwife to Mary, Foster-Mother of Christ

Imbolc, time of new growth, blessing of the crops

My menstrual practices, blood that heals

# Devotionals

Format comes from Lora O'Brien, based on Christian devotionals

Pick a piece of text to think about (Christians use the Bible, I'm using the lore and Bethu Brigitte for mine)

Write about what this text makes you think about.

Add a prayer in the end

# Devotional

## **Bethu Brigitte (Author: [unknown]), Pg 62**

*Guests, then came to Dubthach. Dubthach sundered a gammon of bacon into five pieces, and left them with Brigit to be boiled. And a miserable, greedy hound came into the house to Brigit. Brigit out of pity gave him the fifth piece. When the hound had eaten the piece Brigit gave him another piece to him. Then Dubthach came and said to Brigit: 'Hast thou boiled the bacon, and do all the portions remain?' 'Count them,' saith Brigit. Dubthach counted them, and none of them was wanting. The guests declared unto Dubthach what Brigit had done. 'Abundant,' saith Dubthach, 'are the miracles of that maiden.' Now the guests ate not the food, for they were unworth (thereof), but it was dealt out to the poor and to the needy of the Lord.*

# Devotionals

*Brigid, help us to realise when there is someone around us that we can help. Help us to offer generously what is ours to give and to give it where it is needed most, even if we don't agree or understand how that help will be used. Help us to view others with more charity and kindness and to see that just because others make different choices to us, we can still offer out help and support with a willing heart. Let us recognise the "miserable, greedy hounds" that come our way and offer them the solace and rest they need. Let us see those in need as you would and act accordingly!*

# Meditation

Important part of my spiritual practice

Praying is us talking to the gods, meditation is when they might talk back!

Use of the flame and why

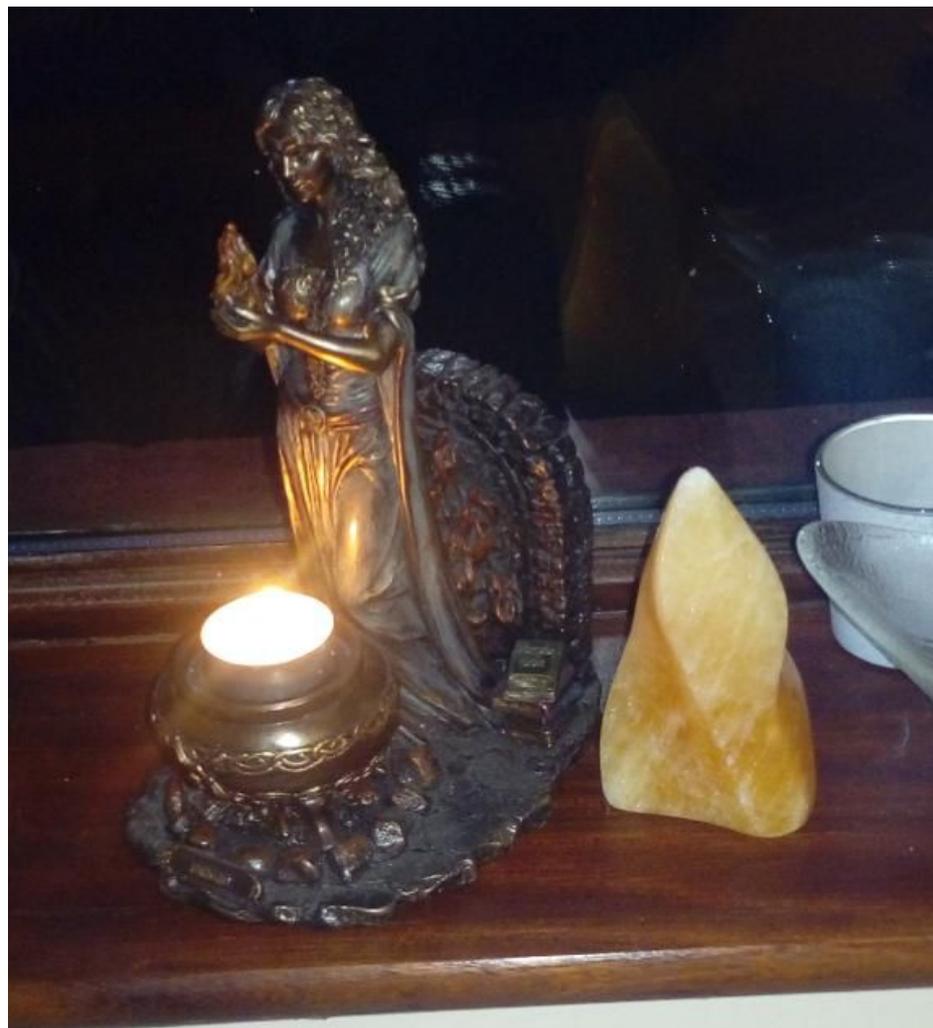
**COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY**

# Meditation

Tools - Candle, glass of water, yourself

- Three deep breaths
- Light the candle (if you haven't one lighting already)
- Look at the flame
- Feed your thoughts into the flame, empty your mind
- When you're ready, come back
- 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 exercise, water, food
- Check in so we know you're alright!! :)

# Meditation



# After the meditation

Take a drink of water, bite to eat

Write down anything that came to you during the meditation

Take a few mins to realise you're not meditating anymore

# Short cuts

## Grounding and centring

- Months and month of sitting or standing somewhere I felt grounded and centred and chanting:
  - *Blood and bone, hearth and home*
- Attention seeking, quick check-in, thanks yous, that sort of thing
  - *Lady Dark, Lady Bright, Light of day, dark of night*
  - This developed out of the different ways I have addressed Brigid over the years, it's not the pagan equivalent of the Lord's Prayer or anything, just a cantrip I use

# Women and children

I'm no warrior, but then neither was Brigid predominately

But.....

Protection is well within her purview and she passes that requirement to me.

Protection is important, particularly those who are vulnerable, women and children, the oppressed, the poor, the victimised, the abused, the hurt. Whether on an individual level or systemic level, her work is intrinsically involved in protection.

# Protective garments

Blue shift

Green Cloak

Fire Cloak

# Candle Magic and Flamekeeping

Candle magic - “lighting a candle” and what it means in Ireland#

Flamekeeping, the tradition in Kildare, pre and post Anglican reformation

Solas Bríde

My own practices re: candles and flames



# References, resources and Links

The Story Archaeologists:

<https://storyarchaeology.com/revisiting-mythical-women-05-the-search-for-brigid/>

Solas Bhríde: <http://solasbhride.ie/the-perpetual-flame/>

Mael Brigde:

<https://brigitssparklingflame.blogspot.com/2015/01/vita-sanctae-brigitae-cogitosus-life.html>

UCC Celt: <https://celt.ucc.ie/>

Morgan Daimler's *Pagan Portals: Brigid*

Seán Ó Dúinn's *The Rites of Brigid, Goddess and Saint*

More on [www.IrishPaganSchool.com](http://www.IrishPaganSchool.com)