

st BRÍGÍO

Three names stand out pre-eminent in the first days of Irish Christianity – those of Patrick, Brigid and Columcille. Patrick was the apostle of the Irish people; Columcille was a missionary to Scotland; but it was Brigid who build on the foundations of Patrick and who became the organiser of religious life for women in Ireland.

Very little factual information about Brigid is to be found. Many "lives" of the saint exist but they are hardly biographies, more hagiographies or stories and legends of the wonders and miracles wrought by her. They are not, however, to be totally dismissed. Behind every story, however far-fetched, there is nearly always to be found an element of truth.

Brigid, we are told, was born about eight years before the death of Saint Patrick – in 453 AD. Her father was a chieftain of Offaly, named Dubhtach; Broicseach, his handmaid (but not his wife), was Brigid's mother. Dubhtach, because of his wife's jealousy, sold Broicseach to a Druid from Faughart, near Dundalk, and hence tradition generally has it that Brigid was born in County Louth.

Despite her upbringing in a pagan household, Brigid received the teaching and example of her Christian mother and this influence obviously had great bearing on the formation of her character. From childhood days she is said to have devoted herself to charitable acts, caring for the poor and the blind. Through her influence the Druid and his family were converted to Christianity and Brigid and her mother were given their freedom. They returned to Offaly and to the house of Dubhtach. There Brigid's acts of charity so provoked her father that he complained he would soon be a pauper. It may, indeed, have been these gifts at his expense that caused Dubhtach to try to marry Brigid to a relative who was keen to have her as his wife. Neither, however, had counted on the total opposition of Brigid to the match and eventually all ideas of marriage had to be abandoned.

It may have been soon after this incident that Brigid resolved to follow the religious life and to give herself entirely to the service of God. She was joined by seven others and together, in about 470, they received the veil from Saint Mac Caille of Croghan, County Laois, later bishop and patron of the Isle of Man. Each nun is said to have chosen one of the eight Beatitudes to represent the grace she specially desired. Brigid's choice was "Blessed are the merciful".

Their first religious house was near Ushnagh in County Westmeath and this was followed by a move to a district near Elphin in County Roscommon. But on being besought by the people of Leinster to return to her native province she decided on Drum Criadh (the ridge of clay) rising above the Curragh plain. There, under a great oak tree, she built her "abbey" and hence the name of the present town of Kildare – Cill Dara, the cell or church of the oak. (<https://stbrigidscathedral.com/life-of-st-brigid/>)

*Let her character be proclaimed by this poem supposed
to have been written about one hundred years after her
death*

*Brigid did not love the pride of life.
She was not querulous, not evil-minded;
She did not love fierce wrangling such as women practise,
She was not a venomous serpent or untruthful,
Nor did she sell the Son of God for things that fade.
She was not harsh to strangers,
She used to treat the wretched lepers kindly;
She built her dwelling on the plain
Which was frequented by vast crowds after her death.*

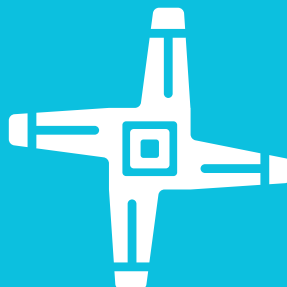


BRÍGÍO'S CROSSES

1. Print and cut out the strips of paper



2. Fold in half

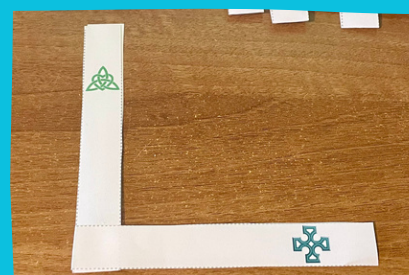


3. Place one strip open vertically.

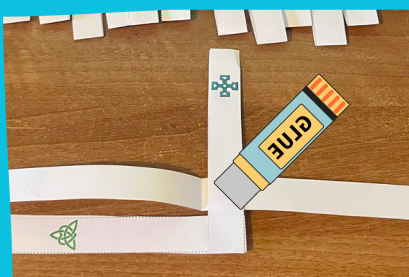
4. Place another strip horizontally across



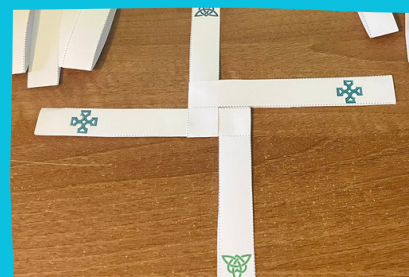
5. Fold both strips back again to form an L shape. Turn paper once in an anticlockwise direction.



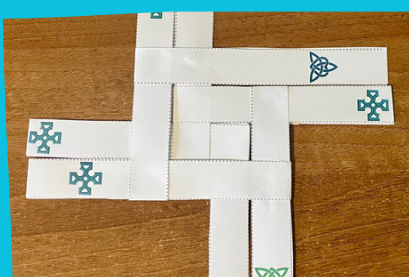
6. Take a new strip and place under the vertical strip. Put a dab of glue stick to secure, fold & turn.



7. Repeat step 6, folding & turning until you have 2 or 3 strips on each side of the cross.



8. Trim the ends to tidy



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