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# Lá Fhéile Bríde — St Brigid's Day

1 Feabhra — 1 February

## Who was St Brigid?

1

### St Brigid (c.451–525 CE)

One of Ireland's three patron saints (with Patrick and Colmcille). Founded a monastery at Kildare — one of the most important in early medieval Ireland. Associated with healing, learning, crafts, spring, and new beginnings.

2

### Brigid and the pre-Christian goddess

Before Christianity, the Celts celebrated a goddess Brigid (or Bríd) associated with the same qualities — healing, poetry, smithcraft. The Christian saint absorbed much of this older tradition.

3

### Imbolc

The ancient Celtic festival marking the beginning of spring — 1 February. One of the four great Celtic festivals (with Bealtaine, Lúnasa, Samhain). Associated with new lambs, longer days, and the stirring of new life.

*Example: Imbolc means 'in the belly' — the ewes were pregnant*

4

### St Brigid's Cross (Cros Bríde)

A distinctive woven cross made from rushes — traditionally made on St Brigid's Eve (31 January) and hung over the door to protect the household. Made from four rushes woven into a square centre with four arms.

5

### First public holiday for a woman

In 2023, Ireland made 1 February a public holiday — Lá Fhéile Bríde. The first Irish public holiday named for a woman.



# Make a St Brigid's Cross

Traditional rush cross — step 1

- MATERIALS: rushes (or strips of paper, straw, or willow). Each cross needs about 24-32 rushes/strips of equal length.
- STEP 1: Hold one rush vertically (Rush A).
- STEP 2: Fold a second rush (Rush B) in half horizontally across the centre of Rush A.
- STEP 3: Rotate 90° clockwise. Fold Rush C in half across the folded end of Rush B.
- STEP 4: Rotate 90° clockwise. Fold Rush D across the folded end of Rush C.
- STEP 5: Continue adding rushes, rotating 90° each time, until the cross is the desired size.
- STEP 6: Bind each arm tightly with a rubber band or tie.
- The cross is hung inside the door: 'Go gcumhdaí Bríd an teach seo' — May Brigid protect this house.

