



# NEA NEWSLETTER



FEBRUARY NEWS 2023

## FEAST of SAINT BRIGID – second patron saint of Ireland

A new Bank Holiday has been introduced in Ireland this year connected to the feast of St Brigid.

### History of St. Brigid

St Brigid is considered a patron saint of Ireland and February 1st marks the first day of spring. Brigid is a Catholic and Orthodox saint. She was a pupil of St. Patrick and became famous for her kindness, mercy, and her miracles. In addition, Brigitte founded Ireland's most famous mixed (male and female) monastery in County Kildare.

At the same time, the legends about Saint Brigitte echo the myths and legends about the three-faced Celtic fertility goddess Brigid - the goddess of war, poetry, crafts, and healing. It is worth noting that before the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, the feast of the goddess Brigid was also celebrated on February 1st.

### Brigid's Cross

Brigid's cross is cross woven from straw or rushes. It has some variations, but the most popular designs feature a woven diamond or lozenge in the centre.

Brigid's cross is typically woven on February 1st, her feast day, as well as the festival of Imbolc in pre-Christian Ireland. Hanging Brigid's cross from the rafters of a house was believed to bring the blessing and protection of the saint for the remainder of the year....

Brigid's cross remains a national symbol of Ireland, along with the shamrock and Celtic harp. From 1962 to 1995, it was incorporated into the logo of the national broadcaster, Raidió Teilifís Éireann(RTÉ).

### Why is there a new Bank Holiday?

The Bank Holiday will take place on the first Monday in February each year, except where St Brigid's day happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that Friday February 1st will be a public holiday.

A "consensus" among the government was reached with employers and trade unions set to name the 10th Bank Holiday after the patron saint as part of the pandemic bonus to thank the public in general, and frontline workers in particular.

The holiday is to help recognise the enormous sacrifices made by Irish people during the Covid pandemic and highlight better times ahead.

Also, a bank holiday on February 1<sup>st</sup> will bridge the considerable length of time between existing public holidays on January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup>.

The Bogha Bríde or Brigid's Day Cross is the symbol of the day. Traditionally, reeds or straws are collected from the fields and crafted into a cross. St. Brigid is Ireland's first native saint, the most celebrated Irish female saint, and was the Abbess of one of the first convents in Kildare.

### Imbolc

Imbolc is a Celtic pagan religious holiday celebrated from February 1–2 each year. Imbolc originated as a festival in honour of the pagan goddess Brigid, which marked the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.

Imbolc was one of four Gaelic seasonal festivals, some of which still have echoes in the festivals of today. Along with Imbolc Beltane (May 1st), Lammass (August 1st) and Samhain (November 1st - All Saints' Day).

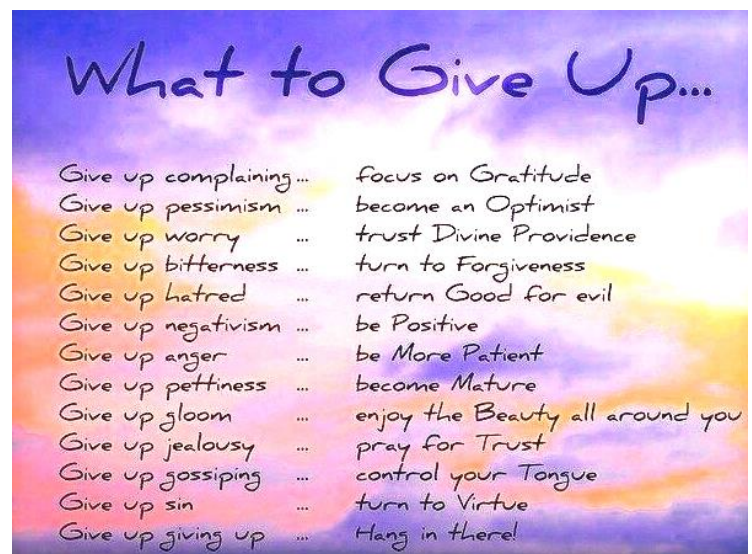


**Kathleen** on your recent birthday!

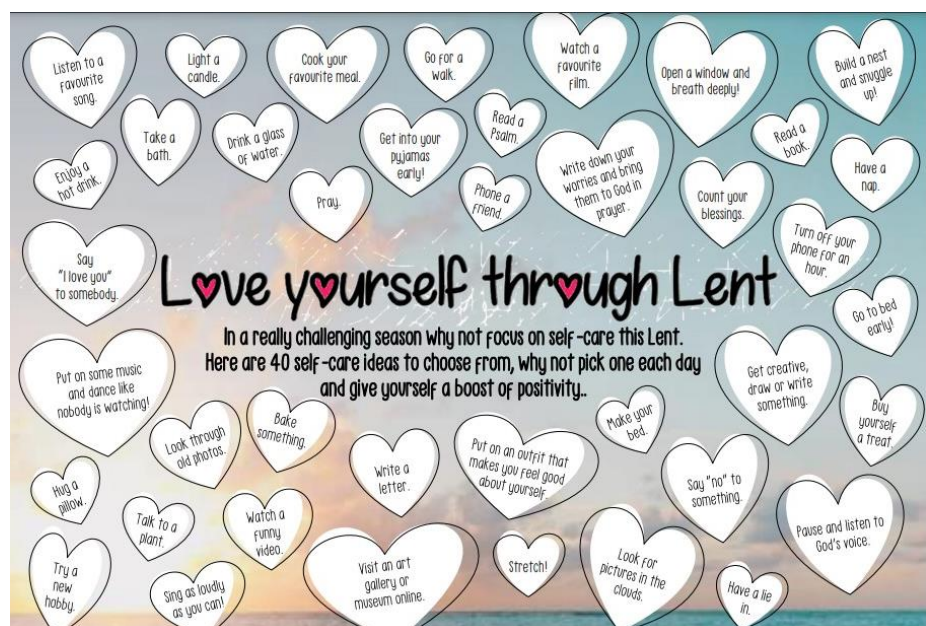
*After a celebratory meal the local RSHMs returned to Arrowsmith House to cut the cake.*







## IDEAS FOR LENT



# FOUNDATION DAY OF OUR SACRED HEART OF MARY FAMILY

## 24 FEBRUARY

### STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS

*by Joyce Johnson Rouse*

I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me  
I am stronger for their courage, I am wiser for their words  
I am lifted by their longing for a fair and brighter future  
I am grateful for their vision, for their toiling on this Earth.

We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us  
They are saints and they are humans, they are angels, they are friends  
We can see beyond the struggles and the troubles and the challenge  
When we know that by our efforts things will be better in the end.

They lift me higher than I could ever fly  
Carrying my burdens away  
I imagine our world if they hadn't tried  
We wouldn't be here celebrating today.

.....



### Some quotations from Gailhac's letters

*Béziers, 8 January 1884*



*See, dear daughter, what an architect does when he wants to erect a large building. He digs the foundations and puts in the first stones which have to support the entire building. He chisels them until they are so firmly embedded that nothing can loosen them.*

*Dear daughter, you want to raise a building that will reach to the throne of Jesus Christ. You want to be the spouse of Jesus Christ and share in his most admirable and priceless work, the work of redemption, in a word to share in the apostolate ...*

*Béziers, 8 February 1883*

*Every Institute which Jesus creates in the Church is like a new branch of this tree which must give shelter to the whole world and to the birds of the air. This Institute then, as a branch of the Church, must experience the suffering the Church has endured and will endure until the end of time.*



## SPRING – TIME OF NEW BEGINNINGS – A REFLECTION.

*“Every Christian has a very personal responsibility to grow in their faith. Yet at times it seems to stand still. That is when God touches us like the earth in springtime, bringing new growth and warmth.” (Ed Price)*

Spring is the natural time of rebirth, renewal and hope – physically and spiritually. It is a time to let go and deal with any regrets. It is also seen more generally as the start of better times. At this time of year, we begin to feel less sluggish, and become more open to inviting changes – both big and small – into our lives.



The symbolism of springtime is one most people can appreciate. In all cultural traditions, the world over, it is a time of rebirth and new beginnings. Whether it is the antics of the numerous fertility gods of rural communities or the Green Man in pagan cultures, springtime itself has never been a season to go unmarked.

Surely spring must be the most anticipated and exciting and blessed season of the year. The cold weather, the bleakness of the bare trees and gardens, are passing away to be replaced with new life and beauty. The summer's burning rays and scorching

days have yet to arrive.

Spring is an 'experience in immortality', observed Henry David Thoreau. He believed you could measure the state of your health by your response to spring. He said that if the prospect of an early morning walk in the sunshine and warbling of a bluebird did not thrill you, you should check your pulse.

It is also believed that a spiritual spring time is a time of rapid and exciting growth. That it is a time when there is a freshness in our souls that is invigorating. Our spiritual senses are alive; there is a spiritual fragrance that awakens us to the glory of God, the wonder of his love and grace, and his willingness to love and forgive.



Unfortunately, it is not like that for everyone.... However, these spiritual seasons, so similar to those of nature's seasons are both necessary for our health and growth if we are to get on with life.

Anne Bradstreet sums up this philosophy beautifully when she says, *'If we had not winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. If we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be welcome. Winter is the perennial backdrop for the glorious arrival of spring. It is the time of rebirth, not only for human creation but for all animals of land, sea and*

*sky.'*

Our lives reflect a similar pattern of ups and downs, gains and losses, new life or the death of a loved one, confusion and fear....worrying less and trusting more makes it easier to enjoy each moment of the life that has been so lovingly given to us by our God.

Despite the world still suffering from wars, economic crises, poverty, illness, homelessness, personal tragedies, terrorism, and now the current aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic – the list is endless – hope will spring eternal and every spring is a timely reminder of that. After a long and mostly bitter winter, the welcome arrival of spring unlocks this hope.

The leaves are faithfully sprouting, flowers are popping up everywhere, daylight time is lengthening, and the birds are singing as they prepare their nests for the arrival of their offspring.

Surely, there is truth in what writer Bern Williams believes:

***‘The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created spring!’***

