



Brigid of Kildare

From the little known of the historical St Brigid of Kildare, stories abound of her concern for the poor and oppressed, and the welcome offered to friends and strangers alike.



St Brigid and the Apples

One day when Brigid was on a long journey she stopped to rest by the wayside. A rich woman heard about this and brought her a beautiful basket of choice apples. No sooner had she received them than a group of very poor people came by and begged her for food. Without a moment's hesitation, Brigid gave them the choice apples. The rich woman complained to Brigid, 'I brought those apples for you, not for them.' Brigid's reply was: 'What is mine is theirs.'

This Brigid legend poses a challenge to us to work for a more equitable distribution of the world's resources, a challenge to a world where thousands die daily from hunger or hunger-related diseases or lack of clean water.

(<http://brigidine.org.au/about-us/our-patroness/>)

A reflection on Celtic Hospitality

(adapted from Margaret Silf, Sacred Spaces)

Sheltering groves are sacred spaces in the Celtic world, drawing us into their restfulness and refreshment. The 'trees' in our inner sacred groves are the people around us. Most of us have an inner circle of people who are deeply trusted and loved, and beyond that there will be outer circles of people with whom we are thrown together by circumstance. For the Celts the circle would have been wider still, including wisdom figures who have gone before us.

Whoever they are, all the people in our grove have roots and branches, like the woodland trees, and each of them has a personal identity. For the most part, at least in the

early stages of any relationship, we tend to meet each other in the more external aspects, or 'branches' of our experience; that is, in the outward and visible things that we share. The Celts, however, would have been quick to recall that in all things there is an invisible as well as a visible dimension, and the space where the invisible becomes manifest in the visible is sacred. If we look below the surface of our human circles, we become aware that what we experience in our relationships with our companions is profoundly shaped by a vast invisible network of roots that we cannot see. As friendship deepens into genuine intimacy, we begin to understand a little of the nature of the other person's roots, or the deeper, concealed aspects of who they are. The more we know of this invisible reality of each other, the more we understand, and the more we understand, the more readily we can forgive whatever needs to be forgiven.

Every individual in our personal sacred grove – and indeed in all of creation – is a sacred space, where the invisible depth of all that makes them why they are is expressed in the visible person we encounter. How might we revere the sacredness of each other? The hospitality of the sacred grove asks us to enter each other's space respectfully, gently and lovingly. Without this reverence there can be no communion. When we recognise the importance of our own invisible roots, and respect others' roots, we are moving into common ground, where real communion of heart and mind might become a possibility.

***Brigid, you were a woman of peace,
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are
troubled and anxious,
And may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts
and in our world.***

