



ECHO

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE www.ourchurch.fr

1ST FEBRUARY IS THE FEAST DAY OF ST BRIGID

St Brigid's Day is celebrated in churches in many countries, although Brigid, you could say, was the female equivalent of St. Patrick of Ireland. It is thought Brigid was born sometime between 452 and 456 AD in Faughart, a few miles from Dundalk in Co. Louth.

Brigid's father was a wealthy chieftain named Dubtach. Legend has it that she caused him great annoyance with her generosity, giving away his valuable goods to the poor and needy.

It is thought by some that Brigid's mother, Brocseach, was a slave in Dubtach's household. Eventually, Dubtach became so frustrated with his daughter's behaviour that he decided to try to remove her from his household. He approached the King of Leinster and offered to sell Brigid to him. However, while Dubtach was negotiating the deal with the King, Brigid, who was waiting outside, managed to give away her father's valuable sword to a beggar. When the King learned of what she had done, he decided she might be a nuisance to his household. Admiring her courage and persistence, he granted Brigid her freedom.

Brigid decided that rather than be married off by her father, she would enter the religious life. She founded the first convent in Ireland in Kildare. It became so well-known that both women and men flocked there to join her religious community. She died about 525 AD. Historical facts about this first abbess of Kildare, are scarce, but her 'Lives', written by Cogitosus in the 7th Century, tell many anecdotes and miracles which over the centuries have become deeply rooted in Irish folklore.

The miracles attributed to Brigid show her to have been a woman of great compassion and generosity. There are stories of how she could multiply food, especially butter, for the poor. Other stories tell of her changing her bathwater to beer, in order to satisfy the thirst of unexpected visitors. Even her cows gave milk three times the same day, to enable visiting bishops to have enough to drink.



In England, there were at least 19 ancient church dedications in her honour (the most famous is St Bride's in Fleet Street). There is also St Bride's Bay, Dyfed, which underlines the strong connection between Irish and Welsh Christianity. St Brigid is patron of poets, blacksmiths, and healers.

Brigid's crosses (pictured above) are hung over the doorway or window of a house to protect it and its occupants from harm.

WHY THERE ARE NO MORE UNICORNS



I'M SORRY BUT I HAVE TO CHARGE YOU 2 SHEKELS FOR THE ADDITIONAL BAG OR I CAN'T LET YOU ABOARD - IT'S ARK POLICY



HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARGARET

NASA CONSULTS THEOLOGIAN

While we were enjoying our Christmas lunch, NASA was launching the James Webb Space Telescope, a \$10 billion replacement for the Hubble Telescope which is capable of viewing objects more than a billion light years away. One of its capabilities is to begin to study in more detail the more than 5,000 planets which have already been detected orbiting other stars by Hubble.

While it cannot 'see' these planets, Webb can examine the light which the planets' atmospheres refract from the stars which they orbit and perform a chemical analysis.

A big question then arises: "Supposing Webb detects signs of industrial pollution, indicating the possible presence of life?"

What would be the effect on all of us to discover that we are truly not alone in the Universe?

In preparation for this possibility, in 2016, NASA funded a programme at the Centre for Theological Enquiry at Princeton University to consider this issue. Involving 24 theologians, their work considered what the impact on faith would be to discover evidence of life beyond Earth.

In a blog item at the Centre's website, the theologian Rev Dr Andrew Davison has written "A Chorus of Planets" which you can read online at

<https://www.ctinquiry.org/blog/2019/12/10/a-chorus-of-planets>



Last weekend Margaret Cross celebrated a very special birthday.

Everyone at ECO wishes you Many Happy Returns, Margaret!

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski

