

A person with long dark hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, black pants, and a black backpack, is walking away from the camera on a dirt path. The path is flanked by tall grass and white wildflowers. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a warm, golden sunset sky.

# *Sacred Earth, Sacred People*

*In the spirit of St Brigid*

† **DIOCESE OF FERNS**



## Message from Bishop Ger Nash

Dear friends in Christ,

As we gather to celebrate the Feast of St Brigid, I offer a blessing to each person taking part in this liturgy.

St Brigid is a woman of faith for our time – compassionate, courageous, prayerful and close to the ordinary people of Ireland. She reminds us that holiness is found not only in churches but also in fields, kitchens, roads, rivers and holy wells; anywhere love is alive.

St Brigid teaches us to recognise the light of Christ in every person and to respond with generosity of heart. She is a bridge between people and a healer of division. As we gather in nature today, may our hearts be opened to God's presence in creation and in one another.

May St Brigid, Mary of the Gael, guide us in faith, hope and love.

With every blessing,

+ Ger Nash



# *Sacred Earth, Sacred People*

## *In the Spirit of St Brigid*

This resource can be used in any parish or suitable location in the Diocese to celebrate St Brigid's Day. It has been designed to be led by lay people. If your parish has a holy well, use it as your gathering place. If not, use a river, stream, lake, seashore or any place of natural beauty. What matters is that we gather with reverence, prayer and faith in the cathedral of earth, sea and sky.

### **Note for leaders**

Keep a gentle, prayerful pace. Allow silence. Pray with reverence. The water and crosses may be brought forward at the appropriate time. If possible, begin with a short walk (pilgrimage) to the well or sacred space. Ireland is a pilgrimage people, walking their faith through landscape, memory and community, just as generations before them did. If participants wish, they may bring a small container of holy water previously blessed by a priest or deacon. This may be used during the ritual to sprinkle the well, river, sea, stream or the St Brigid's crosses as a sign of prayer and connection with the wider Church and invoke God's blessing.

### **Introduction**

St Brigid invites us to awaken to the deep truth that lies at the heart of faith: all life is sacred and God is present in all things. St Brigid is a true Celt (c. 451–523), born into the ancient Irish tradition and later baptised into Christianity. She wove together the old and the new, blessing the land while proclaiming Christ with warmth and kindness.

Legend says St Brigid was born at dawn, neither by day nor by night; at a threshold, neither indoors nor outdoors. Her life reminds us of sacred thresholds - those places of change, growth and new beginnings. She is the saint of fire and water, earth and oak, poetry and compassion, courage and hospitality. She fed the hungry, healed the sick, protected the poor and welcomed the stranger. In our own time, when faith can feel distant for many and fewer gather in our churches, the spirit of St Brigid may be needed more than ever. She reveals a way of faith that is warm, compassionate and close to the people - a gentle bridge of hope in changing times. We walk today with St Brigid, seeking her guidance.

### **St Brigid and the Sacredness of Water**

Water has always been sacred in Irish tradition. It flows through our history as a source of life, healing and blessing. From ancient times, people gathered at wells, streams and rivers to pray, to seek healing and to give thanks for the gift of life.

Of the approximate 3,000 holy wells across Ireland, many are dedicated to St Brigid. These wells were places of pilgrimage where people came to draw water, to bless themselves, to pray for family and to remember loved ones. At St Brigid's holy well in Kildare, people continue to pilgrimage, quietly lighting candles and tying ribbons as signs of hope and healing.

Irish writer Manchán Magan said that holy wells are: "thin places where the prayers of our ancestors still linger in the stones and the water."

In Christian faith, water also reminds us of baptism - our beginning in Christ.





## 1. Gathering

Leader:

We gather today in nature, close to the heart of God,  
in the spirit of St Brigid - woman of peace and protector of the  
land.

Let us begin in silence.

**Silent pause**

### Opening Prayer

Leader:

Loving God,

Creator of earth, sea and sky, we thank You for the life and witness  
of St Brigid.

As she blessed the land and cared for the poor, may we live as  
people of generosity and peace.

May Your presence be upon us now as we gather in faith and  
friendship.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



## **2. Pilgrimage Walk (optional)**

**If your gathering did not begin at the sacred space, the group now walks to the well, river, stream or chosen place of prayer.**

**The walk can be silent, but remember chatting with neighbours is prayer too.**

### **Prayer**

**Leader:**

**As we walk, we remember that we are pilgrims.**

**Every step is a prayer,**

**every breath a gift,**

**every moment an invitation from God.**

**Amen.**



### 3. Gospel Reading

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (4:13–14)

Jesus said:

“Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never be thirsty; indeed, the water I give shall become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**



## 4. Reflection

Leader:

St Brigid reminds us that God is present not only in churches but in the fields, rivers, kitchens and roads of everyday life.

She saw every person as sacred and every moment as a chance to love.

Today, as we stand beside water, we remember our own baptism and our call to bring life, healing and goodness to the world.

**Silent pause**





## 5. Prayer with Water (using holy water if available)

Leader:

We now pray with this water - symbol of life, cleansing and renewal.

### Prayer

Lord God,

Your Spirit moved over the waters of creation.

You refreshed Your people in the desert,

and through the waters of baptism You made us Your own.

As we pray with this water today,

open our hearts to Your healing and renewing presence.

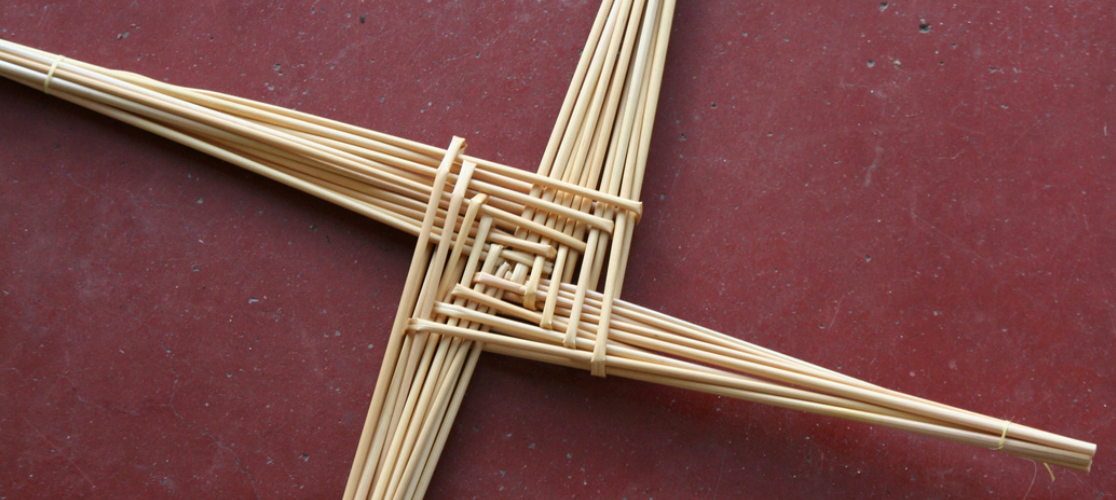
May it remind us of our baptism and of Your constant care.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Ritual action:

If you brought holy water blessed earlier by a priest or deacon, you may use it now to sprinkle the sea, river, well or crosses as a gesture of prayer and reverence. People may receive water poured into their cupped hands as a symbolic gesture of healing and renewal.





## 6. Prayer over St Brigid's Crosses

Leader:

We now pray over these St Brigid's crosses, symbols of faith, welcome and peace.

### Prayer

Loving God,

these crosses, woven in honour of St Brigid, remind us of her kindness, hospitality and faith.

As we take them to our homes, may they inspire us to welcome Christ in all who come to our door,  
to live with compassion and to foster peace within our families.  
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Ritual action:

**Everyone holds up their cross for the blessing and keeps it to bring home.**



## 7. Prayers of the Faithful

Response to each prayer: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For peace in our world, especially in places of violence and fear. May the spirit of St Brigid guide all peacemakers. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the poor, the homeless and all who feel forgotten. May they find comfort, hope and help. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the protection of creation, our common home. May we respect the land and all God has made. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our families, our parish community and all who walk with us in faith. May we be people of welcome and prayer. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our loved ones who have died and all who sleep in the peace of Christ. May they share in eternal life. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our country of Ireland and for our new President, Catherine Connolly, that she may be guided by wisdom, integrity and courage. Inspired by the spirit of St Brigid - woman of peace, hospitality and justice - may our nation grow in understanding, respectful dialogue and unity among all people, cherishing every voice and seeking the common good. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

For greater unity among all Christians: that the followers of Christ, in every tradition, may walk together in mutual respect and friendship. Inspired by St Brigid, a woman of welcome and bridge-building, may our churches work together in prayer and service, bringing the light of the Gospel to our world. Lord, hear us.

**All: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Leader:

Loving God, hear our prayers spoken aloud and the silent prayers of our hearts. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



## 8. Final Prayer and Blessing

Leader:

Let us pray.

God of light and life, we thank You for this time of prayer in the company of St Brigid.

May her example inspire us to live with courage and compassion, to cherish the earth, and to walk always in Your ways.

Through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

### Final Blessing

Leader or Priest (if present):

May the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon us and remain with us forever.

**All: Amen.**

### Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go in peace, to love and serve the Lord, in the spirit of St Brigid.

**All: Thanks be to God.**



# Prayer to St Brigid

St Brigid, woman of peace,  
woman of prayer,  
woman of the land,  
you carried the light of Christ  
in your heart.

You opened your hands to the  
poor and welcomed the  
stranger.

You protected the weak  
and blessed the earth.

Keep us under the shelter of  
your cloak.

Watch over our homes and  
families.

Guide us with your wisdom  
and fill us with your kindness.  
May your faith shape our lives  
and your courage strengthen  
our hearts,  
that we may always live  
as children of God.  
Amen.

