



rigid of Kildare

She lived about 451 to 525

St. Bridget lived in Ireland a few years after St. Patrick. (he died about 460).

Born in 451 or 452 of princely ancestors at Faughart, near Dundalk, County Louth; d. 1 February, 525, at Kildare. Refusing many good offers of marriage, she became a nun and received the veil from St. Macaille.

With seven other virgins she settled for a time at the foot of Croghan Hill, but moved then to Druin Criadh, in the plains of Magh Life, where under a large oak tree she erected her subsequently famous Convent of *Cill-Dara*, that is, the church of the oak (now Kildare), in the present county of that name. Biographers have said the saint's mother was a slave in the court of her father Dubhthach, and Irish chieftain of Leinster.

Not alone was St. Bridget a patroness of students, but she also founded a school of art, including metal work and illumination. From the Kildare scriptorium came the wondrous book of the Gospels, which elicited unbounded praise from Giraldus Cambrensis, but which has disappeared since the Reformation.

According to this twelfth-century ecclesiastic, nothing that he had ever seen was at all comparable to the "Book of Kildare", every page of which was gorgeously illuminated, and he concludes a most laudatory notice by saying that the interlaced work and the harmony of the colours left the impression that "all this is the work of angelic, and not human skill".

Small wonder that Gerald Barry assumed the book to have been written night after night as St. Bridget prayed, "an angel furnishing the designs, the scribe copying". Even allowing for the exaggerated stories told of St. Brigid by her numerous biographers, it is certain that she ranks as one of the most remarkable Irishwomen of the fifth century and as the Patroness of Ireland.

She is lovingly called the "Queen of the South: the Mary of the Gael" by a writer in the "Leabhar Breac".

St. Brigid died leaving a cathedral city and school that became famous all over Europe.