

So many feast days.....a feast of feast days!

The first week in February has a lot of feast days. February the 1st is the Feast of St Brigid, one of our patron saints. She is best known for her St Brigid's crosses which she would have made out of reeds or rushes and used to help to teach people about Jesus and his death on a cross for us. Have you ever seen one? Maybe you have one at home?

You can watch a video in our Children's Corner of how to make one of her crosses out of straws and if your Irish is good, you could listen to a story about how she made a cross as she sat at the bedside of a chieftain as he lay very ill. Even though he told her that he did not want to know anything about Jesus, by the time she had finished making the cross, he wanted to know all about him and went on to ask her to have him baptised!



Another famous story is about her cloak. She approached the King of Leinster looking for land to build her monastery, where she and other holy women who wanted to serve God and the poor, would live but the King said no. Brigid was not



put off by this. Instead she prayed that the King's heart would soften. So she asked him again but this time she asked, "Give me as much land as my cloak will cover." Seeing her small cloak, the King laughed and said yes. However what happened next alarmed him! Brigid instructed her four helpers each to take a corner of the cloak and walk in opposite directions – north, south, east and west. As they did this the cloak began to grow and spread across much land. When he saw how much land the cloak was covering the King begged Brigid to stop! He

realised that she was truly blessed by God. The King became a patron of Brigid's monastery, assisting her with money, food and gifts. Later he became a Christian and began helping the poor too, like Brigid. (painting : Oil on canvas, Barry Maguire).

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord or Candlemas day!

February 2nd is 40 days since Christmas Day and is the day when the Church celebrates Mary and Joseph bringing their baby, Jesus, to The Temple in Jerusalem to present him to God. **It is called the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.** Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the Temple to be presented is a little bit like when your parents brought you to the church when you were a baby to have you baptised. In some places people keep their cribs up until this day – I kept mine up so after tomorrow I will put it back in my attic!



While Mary and Joseph were in the Temple, they met 2 old and very holy people, a man called Simeon and a prophet called Anna. Both Simeon and Anna immediately realised that Jesus was a very special baby indeed. They praised God for bringing them to The Temple at the right time to see the one who was going to save everyone. If you have a bible you can read this story in the Gospel of Luke (LK 2:21-40). The words Simeon spoke when he saw Jesus have become a prayer that is still used by the church today.

This Feast day is also called **Candlemas Day** because in the past, candlelit processions were held on this day and it is a day for bringing candles to the church for a blessing, candles that you can then use in your house for prayer or on special occasions. These blessed candles like our baptismal candles, are a special sign that Jesus is with us: on days in which everything is fine, but also, and especially, on days in which I'm sad or when things are not going so well.



February 3rd is the **Feast of St Blaise** and a day when people often come to the church to have their throats blessed! This is because St Blaise had the gift of healing which he used on one occasion to save a child who was choking on a fish bone. Apparently even the animals knew he could use God's power to heal them and so they used to come to him when they were sick or wounded but if he was praying, they waited patiently until he was finished! When St Blaise was young he decided that only knowing Jesus could make someone truly happy, so he decided to become a priest and spend his life bringing the good news about Jesus to as many as he could. St Blaise spent his life in his home country of Armenia, now part of Turkey (see if you it on a map).

