



Know & Grow

Informative pieces intended to help you know more about our faith and to promote both individual and community growth

KNOW & GROW TOPIC OF THE WEEK: FEBRUARY 1ST—FEAST DAY OF ST. BRIGID (BRIDGET) OF KILDARE, IRELAND: PATRON SAINT OF ST. BRIDGET'S CHURCH

A woman of great faith, St. Brigid is revered for her gentleness, piety, and charity to the poor. She was once called to the bedside of a dying pagan chief to speak to him about God and Christ's love for mankind. To illustrate her point, she picked some of the reeds covering the dirt floor and wove them into a cross, which she then used to help him understand how Christ died. St. Brigid was one of many holy men and women who continued St. Patrick's tireless work of converting the Celtic pagans after his death.



Brigid was raised in the mid-5th century in Faughart, Ireland. Her father was a pagan chief and her mother a slave. At one point, her father wished her to marry the King of Ulster, but she refused and eventually won his permission to become a nun. In time, the king of Lienster recognized Brigid had a beautiful soul and gifted her a large plain in Kildare, Ireland. Brigid built many convents in Ireland, but Kildare was the most famous for housing both monks and nuns.

Interesting Facts:

- She is patron saint of Ireland, newborn babies, midwives, Irish nuns, dairymaids and cattle.
- As a child, St. Brigid herded sheep, pigs, and cattle and grew to love animals.
- As abbess, St. Brigid ranked above the abbot who governed the monks; that's why she's often shown carrying a bishop's hooked staff (as in our statue). Some early accounts state that Brigid was consecrated a bishop by St. Mel.

“BONUS” KNOW & GROW TOPIC OF THE WEEK: FEBRUARY 2ND—THE MULTI-FACETED FEAST DAY

February 2nd is known by many names — a secular one is Groundhog Day, but in the Church, it is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Candlemas Day, and World Day for Consecrated Life. In past years, it was also the Feast of the Purification of Mary.

The **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord** is celebrated February 2nd to mark the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ, forty days after His birth, in keeping with the biblical significance of the number forty and with Jewish custom, was presented in the temple in Jerusalem by His parents, Mary and Joseph. The Mosaic law prescribed that every firstborn male in Israel had to be consecrated to God forty days after birth and redeemed with a sum deposited in the Temple treasury. This was in remembrance of the firstborn sons being preserved from death on the night of the first Passover during the exodus from Egypt.



The Gospel according to St. Luke gives us this account of Jesus' presentation in the Temple: when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." St. Joseph and our Lady entered the temple, unnoticed among the crowd. The "desired of all nations" came to the house of his Father in his Mother's arms. The liturgy of this feast-day exhorts us, in the Responsorial Psalm, to adore the King of Glory in the heart of his humble family: *Attolite, portae, capita vestra, et elevamini, portae aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae*: "Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in."

The annual commemoration of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple is also a Marian celebration and therefore at certain times in the past it was also known as the **Feast of the Purification of Mary**. Even though Mary was preserved by God from original sin, as a Hebrew mother she chose to submit to the Law of the Lord, and therefore offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.[4] Mary's offering was thus a sign of her prompt obedience to God's commands. "Through this example, foolish child, will you learn to obey the Holy Law of God, regardless of any personal sacrifice?"[5]

This Feast is also known as **Candlemas Day**; in commemorating the arrival and manifestation of the divine light to the world, the Church blesses candles, a symbol of Jesus' perennial presence and the light of faith that the faithful receive in the sacrament of Baptism.

So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life.

In his 2019 homily on **World Day for Consecrated Life**, Pope Francis said: "This then is the consecrated life: praise which gives joy to God's people, prophetic vision that reveals what counts. Consecrated life is not about survival, it is not about preparing ourselves for *ars bene moriendi*: this is the temptation of our days, in the face of declining vocations. No, it is not about survival, but new life. 'But... there are only a few of us...' – it's about new life. It is a living encounter with the Lord in his people. It is a call to the faithful obedience of daily life and to the unexpected surprises from the Spirit. It is a vision of what we need to embrace in order to experience joy: Jesus"

Please pray for those that have responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to be a consecrated person — that they may continue to be inspired by Jesus Christ and respond generously to God's gift of their vocation, and that they experience the support of the Church as they continue their growth in holiness.

Sources: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/consecrated-life/world-day-for-consecrated-life.cfm> , <https://nrvic.net/274/publication/4171/article/10041-world-day-for-consecrated-life-february-2-2018> , <https://opusdei.org/en-us/article/feast-of-the-presentation/>