

The Life and Times of St Brigid

Lesson Plans



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Overview

These lessons are designed to support the teaching of information about the life and impact of St Brigid to 4th to 6th class. The lessons can be taught individually or taught in blocks and they accompany the booklet titled:

The Life & Times of St Brigid.

Abarta Heritage for Kildare County Council



Kildare County Council
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



Lesson 1 – Life in Early Medieval Ireland - Now and Then

Resources

- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 6-8.
- Venn Diagram Template

Lesson Overview

This lesson is designed to introduce children to St Brigid's time period (early medieval Ireland). Children will learn about the type of work people did, where they lived and what every day life was like. It will also touch on what life was like around Europe.

Introduction

- Before beginning print the template Venn Diagram and prepare anything else that may be needed – images etc.
- As students may have prior knowledge of this time period, students can brainstorm what they know or think they know about life in 500AD.
- As students read through the material, create a list of bullet points of what may be important information for their Venn Diagram

Lesson Body

- Ask students to imagine they are living in Kildare 1500 years ago. What do they see, what are people wearing, where are they living.
- Children can engage in a table discussion or pair discussion what would they like about living so long ago, what would they miss from today's world?

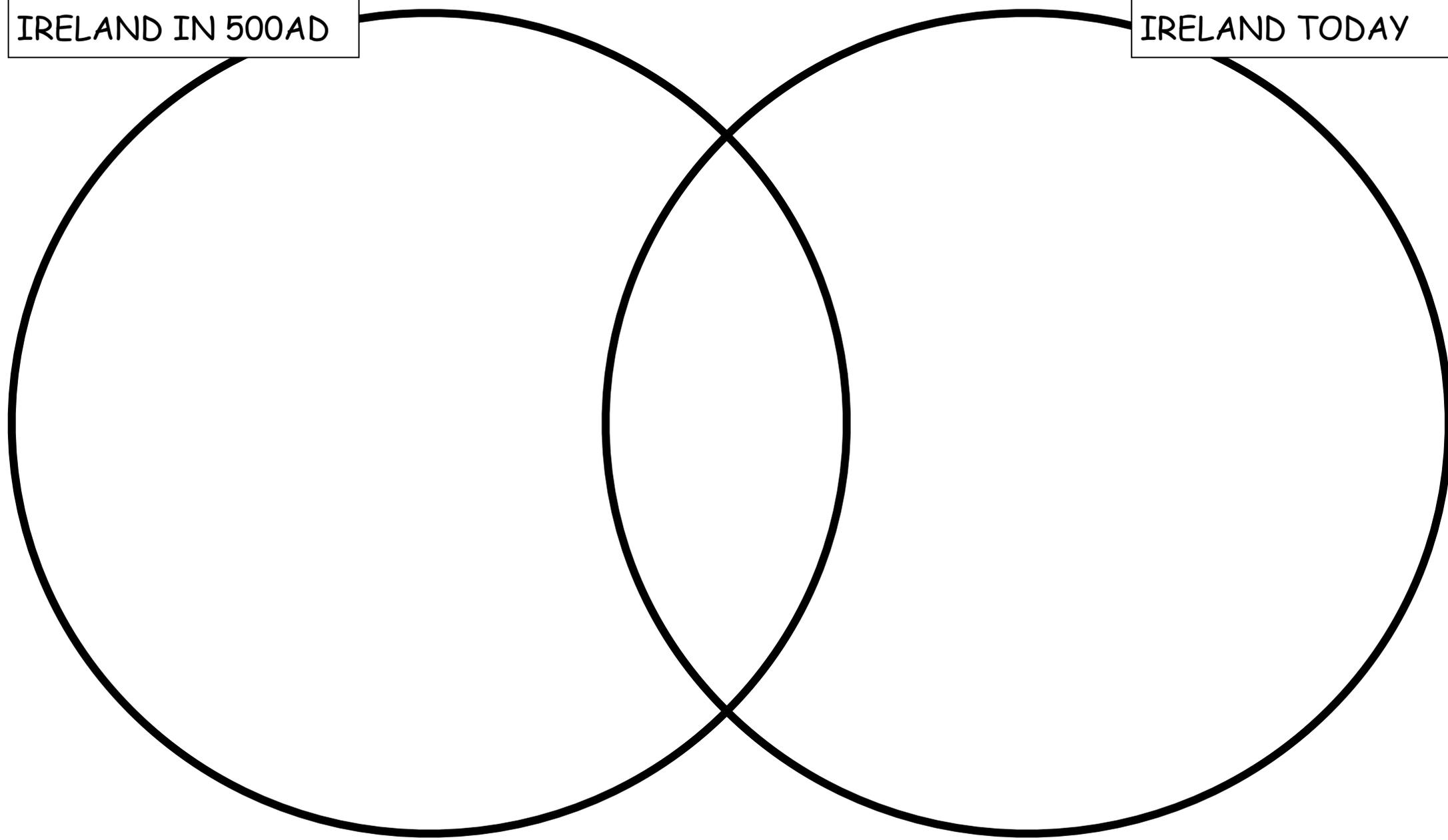
- Students can work individually or in groups to complete their Venn Diagram task – Similarities and differences between Ireland in 500AD and Ireland today. The children will write a list of information in each part of the circle
 - Information about life that only applies to Ireland in 500AD – eg. People lived in ringforts, Ireland had kings, Ireland had slaves etc.
 - Information about life that is the same/similar today as it was in 500AD– eg. Farming/ farm chores.
 - Information about life today that is different from 1500 years ago – eg. Technology, different jobs, school.

Extension Activity

- Write a diary entry for a child living in Ireland in 500AD. Talk about everyday chores, what you do in your free time, what games you play and how you learn.

IRELAND IN 500AD

IRELAND TODAY



Lesson 2 - Early Medieval Monasteries - Design your own monastery

Resources

- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 6,8, 10, 12 & 13.
- Wordsearch (on page 9 of the booklet, answers are on page 32).
- Images of famous early medieval monasteries – Skellig Michael, Clonmacnoise and Glendalough. These can be found here:
 - o Glendalough: <http://monastic.ie/history/glendalough/>
 - o Skellig Michael: <http://monastic.ie/history/skellig-michael/>
 - o Clonmacnoise: <https://heritageireland.ie/visit/places-to-visit/clonmacnoise/>

Lesson Overview

- This lesson is designed to introduce children to life in monasteries in Early Medieval Ireland. It will introduce children to some key terms about monasteries. The lesson will also touch on pagan Ireland.

Lesson Introduction

- Before beginning, print the wordsearch and images of monasteries like Clonmacnoise and Skellig Michael.
- Begin by asking children do they know what a monastery is? Can they name any local monasteries or famous monasteries. Share images of Skellig Michael and Clonmacnoise on the white board.
- What did monks do in the monastery? How did they make money?

Lesson Body

- Children will read through information on p8.
- Ask children to choose the most important building in the monastery? Explain your answer.
- What job would you have liked to do in the monastery - farming, writing manuscripts, working with metal to make chalices, working with stone to carve high crosses, building huts, teaching?
- Students will complete the word search of key terms.

Extension

- Students can design their own monastery on a piece of paper. They must remember to include all the buildings listed in the booklet. They can also include a hospital and farmland. Remember that monasteries were wealthy places, so they needed to have walls to protect them and keep their animals inside.

Lesson 3 – St Brigid’s Life - Cartoon Challenge

Lesson Resources

- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 10, 12 - 14.
- Cartoon strip template

Lesson Overview

- In this lesson children will learn about the life of St Brigid. The children will create a six picture cartoon strip outlining the early part of Brigid’s life.

Lesson Introduction

- The children now have some sense of what life was like in Early Medieval Ireland and what life would have been like for Brigid growing up. Ask students to think about some of the things Brigid would have to do as a child.
- Print copies of the cartoon strip template.

Lesson Body

- Children will read page 10. Ask children to pick out two or three key pieces of information that they could use for their cartoon strip.
- Why do you think the information about Brigid’s life is so vague? What could have happened to some of the sources?
- Children will read page 12 & 14.

- Children will list four more ideas that they can use for their cartoon strip.
- Class discussion what should be included in the cartoon strip.
- Students will complete cartoon strip.

Extension

- Complete mindful colouring page of Brigid on page 29.
- Children can research other saints from Early Medieval Ireland.

Cartoon Strip Template

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"Please help, we've nothing!" "No problem," said Brigid "Here is Dad's sword!"



"Where is my sword?" roared Dubthach! "I gave it to a poor family" said Brigid



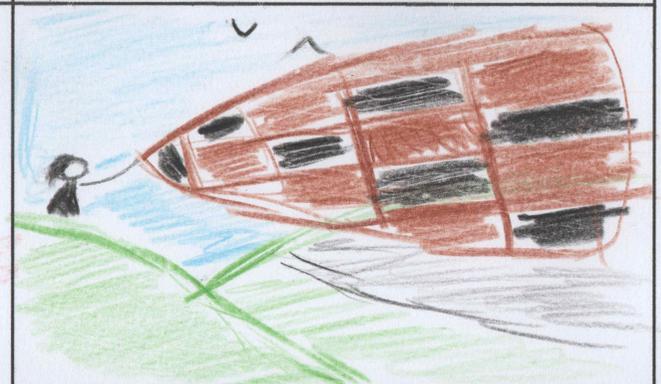
"Go to your room!!" bellowed Dubthach



"Cure my ears and you can have any thing"



"I can't believe it, my ears are normal!"



"I want all the land my cloak covers"

Lesson 4 – Brigid’s Miracles – Make your own St Brigid’s cloak

Lesson Resources

- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 16-17.
- A4 card (black or white), small squares of paper, various paints and other colours, glue.

Lesson Overview

- In this lesson the children will learn about some of the miracles that have been attributed to St Brigid. The children will create their own version of St Brigid’s cloak using paint and paper.

Lesson Introduction

- The children have been learning about St Brigid and some of the facts about her life. As this lesson focuses on her miracles begin by asking the children what is a miracle?
- Children can brainstorm what sort of miracles St Brigid was responsible for.

Lesson Body

- The class will read p16 & 17.
- Make a list of the miracles that are attributed to St Brigid. Which miracle do you think is the most important?
- If Brigid was living today do you think her miracles would be different? How would they be different? What type of people might she help?
- Create your own version of St Brigid’s cloak.

- Each child will be given several small paper squares.
- Children can colour, paint and design their squares whichever way they want.
- Children will glue their squares on their card to create a patchwork style quilt.

Extension

- Create a drawing about a modern miracle St Brigid might perform.

Lesson 5 – St Brigid’s Death and Legacy – Map activity

Lesson Resources

- St Brigid Life and Legacy Education Pack pages 18 - 20.
- Mark locations on the map in the workbook

Lesson Overview

- In this lesson the children will learn about the death of Brigid, what happened to her body after death and what medieval relics were.

Lesson Introduction

- Ask children to list what they have learned about Brigid so far.
- Explain to children that a relic was usually a part of the body of a saint or their clothing.
- What would a modern relic be? When you visit a museum would you see relics? Maybe medals or jerseys belonging to famous sports people.

Lesson Body

- The class will read pages 18 - 19.
- Why do you think relics were so important to churches? Relics were very important to Medieval churches as they attracted lots and lots of visitors/pilgrims. These pilgrims would then give a donation to the church to light candles or receive a blessing from the relic. Thus relics were vital to the maintenance of the churches.

- In medieval times it was very hard to know if a relic was fake or real, that is why we read about three relics of the head of Brigid.
- What do you think would be kept as relics today?
- Identify the locations on the map of Europe to show where some of her relics ended up. Answers: Arm- Geldrop, Netherlands, Tooth and finger bone- Cologne, Germany, Skull- Strasbourg, France, Skull - Lisbon, Portugal, Skull fragments- Lumiar, Portugal.

Extension

- Design an advertisement for your church advertising a new relic.

Lesson 6 – A Spring Time Saint – St Brigid’s Fire – build a replica of a tower to house St Brigid’s fire.

Resources

- Sheets of paper, sellotape.
- Tower building instructions
- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 22 - 24.

Lesson Overview

- This lesson integrates a STEM challenge with learning about one of St Brigid’s miracles – St Brigid’s fire.

Introduction

- St Brigid’s fire is one of the most enduring and mysterious of St Brigid’s miracles. It is an important symbol of St Brigid, and today St Brigid’s flame burns in the Solas Bhríde spiritual centre.
- Ask students why do they think flames/ fire might be associated with St Brigid?

Lesson Body

- All of the information we have about St Brigid’s fire comes from Gerald of Wales. Read p 24.
- What makes St Brigid’s fire a miracle?
- The fire was relit in 1993.

Build a tower to house Brigid’s Fire with paper and sellotape.

- Before you begin, explain the task to the class. Their building could be a round tower (see page 18 for a reference image).

- We are going to build a tower out of paper and sellotape. Sellotape should be used to join pieces of paper together and stick the tower to the ground.
- Show the class how flimsy a sheet of paper is. What can we do to make it stronger? Roll it or folded over on itself multiple times to make it stronger.
- Explain to the class that if they use paper tubes they will be able to make a much stronger tower.
- You can show your class this video to help them – Tallest tower engineering challenge 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJr2DJRky5c&t=229s>
- They can strengthen their tower by putting paper tubes horizontally across the structure to add support.
 - **Organise the class into teams.**
 - Each team has 5 minutes to plan their build.
 - Each team has 15 minutes to build their tower.
 - Give each team 20 sheets of paper.
 - The tallest, strongest tower that is built at the end of 15 minutes is the winner.

Extension Activity

- Complete spring flowers colouring page on page 23 of the booklet.

Lesson 7 – Placenames associated with St Brigid – map activity

Resources

- Google maps
- Atlas/map of Ireland.
- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet pages 26 & 27.

Lesson Overview

- This lesson focuses on St Brigid's legacy and how her name is associated with places all over Ireland and the world.

Introduction

- St Brigid is a very famous saint – is she famous outside of Ireland? Do you know of any places that are named after St Brigid? Make a list of some of the places the class know named after St Brigid.

Lesson Body

- Read page 26 & 27.
- Brigid is from Kildare so her name is associated with a lot of different places in Kildare. Do you think we will find her name outside of Kildare?
- Group the students and give them different counties to look for St Brigid's name.
- Here are some examples of places students can find:
 - o Schools

- GAA clubs
- Holy wells
- Why do you think so many schools are called St Brigid's?
- St Brigid's name spread beyond Ireland. As we know her relics travelled all over Europe during medieval times, can you find any churches in Europe that still have some of her relics (see page 19 & 20 of the booklet - part of her skull is in a small chapel near Lisbon in Portugal, a portion of her cloak is in Bruges in Belgium and a relic is in Great St Martin Church, Cologne in Germany)?
- In the 19th and 20th centuries, St Brigid's name became famous again around the world in the next lesson we will learn about St Brigid's international legacy.

Extension Activity

- Create a map of all of the places named after St Brigid in Ireland.
- Create a legend that explains what each site is – holy well, church, school, GAA club etc.

Lesson 8 – St Brigid’s legacy – write a letter to another school in another country about St Brigid/ differences between Ireland today and then.

Resources

- Google maps
- Brigidine Sisters Website - <https://brigidine.org.au/about-us/our-story/>
- The Life & Times of St Brigid Booklet page 28.

Lesson Overview

- This lesson will investigate the international element to St Brigid’s legacy. We will also review St Brigid’s legacy in Ireland.

Introduction

- Read through page 28 in the booklet. Is there anything that the class would like to add to St Brigid’s legacy?
- What do you think is the most important part of St Brigid’s legacy?

Lesson Body

- Just like the last lesson where we investigated how St Brigid’s name can be found all over the island of Ireland, in this lesson we will investigate what countries St Brigid’s name can be found in. We will also learn about the Brigidine sisters.
- In the 19th century, millions of Irish people began left Ireland to begin new lives abroad. This is called emigration. Ask the class why did this happen? (Famine, poverty, no local employment, improvements in travel - all these factors meant it was easier for people to move country).
- The Brigidine sisters moved to Australia in the 1880s to help promote Christian education.

- Use Google Maps to find schools names after St Brigid in Australia.
- Class activity – the class can compose a letter to a school in Australia.
- Some writing prompts:
 - Write about what life is like in Ireland
 - What you learn in school
 - What you have learned about St Brigid
 - Why do you think St Brigid is important?
 - Ask some questions about what life/ school is like in Australia.

Extension Activity

- Make a map of the world highlighting where St Brigid's schools are across the globe.

Lesson 9 – St Brigid’s spiritual and artistic legacy – make a St Brigid’s cross and/or stained glass window.

Resources

- Brigid 1500 website - A website with information and activities for children including a video about how to make a St Brigid’s cross.
- The Life & Times of St Brigid, page 21.
- To make a St Brigid’s cross
 - o 16 Reeds (or Straws)
 - o 4 small rubber bands
 - o Scissors

Lesson Overview

This lesson focuses on St Brigid’s artistic legacy in Ireland. Students will also learn how to make a St Brigid’s cross.

Introduction

- We have already learned about and located many wells dotted around Ireland that are named after St Brigid. Can you remember where some of them are? Mark them on the map of Ireland on page 27.

Lesson Body

- Images of Brigid are found all over Ireland in churches and in manuscripts.
- What is St Brigid’s lasting artistic legacy – the St Brigid’s cross.

- **How to make a St Brigid's cross**

- Hold one of the reeds vertically. Fold a second reed in half.
- Place the first vertical reed in the centre of the folded second reed.
- Hold the centre overlap tightly between thumb and forefinger.
- Turn the two reeds held together 90 degrees anti-clockwise so that the open ends of the second reed are pointing vertically upwards.
- Fold a third reed in half and over both parts of the second reed to lie horizontally from left to right against the first straw. Hold tight.
- Holding the centre tightly, turn the three reeds 90 degrees anti-clockwise so that the open ends of the third reed are pointing upwards.
- Fold a new reed in half over and across all the reeds pointing upwards.
- Repeat the process of rotating all the reeds 90 degrees anti-clockwise, adding a new folded reed each time until all reeds have been used up to make the cross.
- Secure the arms of the cross with elastic bands. Trim the ends to make them all the same length. The St Bridget's Cross is now ready to hang.
- You can find a video about the process here - <https://brigid1500.ie/get-involved/school/>

Extension Activity

- Make a stained glass window.

- Resources:

- Tracing Paper
- Coloured tissue paper
- Black card
- Glue
- Scissors
- Marker/Pencil

- Instructions:

- Draw a window shape (can be a round headed or pointed window) on the tracing paper and cut it out.
- Cut up the coloured tissue paper into small shapes and glue these onto the tracing paper window.
- Cut the card into thin strips and glue the strips along the edge of the tracing paper to make a black frame for your window.
- Hang or hold the window in front of the window to see the light shine through the different coloured tissue paper.

Lesson 10 – Pause for Peace – Design a poster

Resources

- Video of Pause for Peace message from An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xLs8h8RTiA>
- Read the following report on Pause for Peace 2023 – <https://solasbhríde.ie/co-kildare-calls-for-a-pause-for-peace-on-st-brigids-day-february-1st-2023/>
- Paper & coloured pencils/markers for poster.

Lesson Overview

This lesson focuses on one of the lasting legacies of St Brigid – the Pause for Peace. The pause for peace is a joint initiative by Into Kildare and Solas Bhríde Spiritual Centre to promote peace around the world.

Introduction

- Introduce the idea of a Pause for Peace. It is a minute of reflection on 1st February at 12:00.
- “By pausing for peace, we send out a message that we actively oppose warfare and the proliferation of arms, which wreak havoc on human beings as well as on the natural world. This movement aims to awaken and build a spirit of global solidarity in our search for peace. It would be a fitting tribute to Saint Brigid and to all our ancestors if it were marked with a Pause for Peace on her feast-day, February 1st each year.” Sr. Rita Minehan.

Lesson Body

- St Brigid is a symbol of kindness and peace. Ask children to think of ways we could promote the idea of a Pause for Peace? What activities could we come up with.

- Children will work together to create posters or images to promote the message of the pause for peace. Images of doves, love heart, the world, holding hands can all be used.

Extension Activity

- Write a letter to a local government representative asking for them to help promote the pause for peace.
- Host an assembly with the whole school promoting the pause for peace and organise for the school to come together on the 01st February at 12.00 for a minutes silence.