

A Legend about Saint Brigid of Ireland

Brigid and the Butter



Retold by
Pamela Love

Illustrated by
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Love, Pamela, 1966- author. | Stott, Apryl, illustrator. Title: Brigid and the butter : a legend about Saint Brigid of Ireland / retold by Pamela Love ; illustrated by Apryl Stott.

Description: Boston, Mass. : Pauline Books & Media 2017.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016021514 | ISBN 9780819812339 (hc.) | ISBN 0819812331 (hc.)

Subjects: LCSH: Brigid, of Ireland, Saint, approximately 453--approximately 524--Juvenile literature. | Brigid, of Ireland, Saint, approximately 453--approximately 524--Legends.

Classification: LCC BR1720.B74 L68 2017 | DDC 270.2092--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016021514>

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Published by Pauline Books & Media, 50 Saint Paul’s Avenue, Boston, MA 02130–3491

Printed in the U.S.A.

BTB VSAUSAPEOILL8-2910065 1233-1

www.pauline.org

Pauline Books & Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international congregation of women religious serving the Church with the communications media.



For all those
who feed the hungry





Long ago in deep-green Ireland lived a bright-eyed slave girl named Brigid. She and her mother worked very hard for their master. By her tenth summer, Brigid was cooking, cleaning, and caring for the master's cows. Every day she led them to the meadow to graze and to drink from the stream there. Mornings and evenings she milked them. Besides all that, twice a week she spent hours making fresh butter.



Butter making was no easy job. Brigid poured the cream—the richest, thickest part of the milk—into a churn nearly as high as her chin. Into it went a thick paddle called a dash. Up and down, up and down, and on and on she dipped the heavy dash. Finally, when her aching arms could hardly go on, butter would appear, floating in the churn.



Next Brigid washed the butter in cold water several times and salted it. Only then could she and her mother enjoy the treat. Tired as she was, the taste of freshly-buttered bread made all Brigid's work worthwhile.



Yet Brigid's life wasn't all churning and chores. She liked walking on buttercup-covered fields and talking to the people in her village. She even got to see Bishop Patrick from time to time as he traveled throughout the countryside.



One warm afternoon, Brigid and her mother came upon a small group of people gathered around the bishop. “Once there was a huge crowd listening to Jesus,” Bishop Patrick said. “He had been teaching them all day long. The people were really hungry and they had no food.”

Oh no! Brigid thought. It's terrible to be so hungry.

“Jesus didn’t want to send them away unfed,” Bishop Patrick continued. “Then a boy in the crowd gave one of the disciples all the food he had brought with him—five small barley loaves and two fish.” Moving to the front of the crowd Brigid heard the bishop say, “Do you know what happened next? Jesus blessed the food the boy had given up and everyone ate until they were full.”

