

St. Brigid

St Brigid and the Fox



Brigid had a wonderful way with animals. One day a friend of the monastery workmen came to her with a sad tale that the friend had accidentally killed the king of Leinster's pet fox, thinking that it was a wild animal. The man was arrested. His wife and children begged the king to spare his life to no avail. The workman asked Brigid to intercede.



Although Brigid loved animals, she thought it silly that a man's life should be demanded in return for the fox's, so she set out for the court. The way lay through a wood, where the road was a mere track and the horse had to walk. Brigid prayed for the right words to speak to the angry king to save the life of the woodsman.

Suddenly she saw a little fox peeping shyly at her around a tree and she had an idea. She told the driver to stop and called the animal to her. Immediately it sprang into the car beside her and nestled happily in the folds of her cloak. Brigid stroked its head and spoke to it gently. The little fox licked her hand and looked at her adoringly.

When she reached the king's castle, the fox trotted after her. She found the ruler still in a mighty rage. "Nothing," he told her angrily, "nothing in the world could make up to me for the loss of my beloved pet. Death is too good for that idiot of a workman. He must die as a warning to others like him. Let him die." The king stormed on, "It is no use whining to me about mercy. That little fox was my companion, even my friend. It was brutally killed for no reason. What harm did I do to that man? Do you have any notion how much I loved my little fox that I have cared for ever since it was born?"

The king's furious eyes met Brigid's loving ones. Yes, indeed, she could well understand it. She was truly sorry for his loss for she, too, loved all animals and especially tame little foxes. Look here . . . she beckoned forward her new pet from the woods that had been crouching behind her.

The king forgot his anger in this new interest. He and his household looked on delightedly while Brigid proceeded to put the fox through all kinds of clever tricks. It obeyed her voice and tried so hard to please her that the onlookers were greatly entertained. Soon she was surrounded by laughing faces.

The king told her what his own little fox used to do. "See, it used to jump through this hoop, even at this height." But so could Brigid's at her first sign of command! When the king's fox wanted a titbit, it used to stand on its hind legs with its fore paws joined as though it were praying . . . why, so could Brigid's! Could anything be more amusing? When his mood had completely changed, Brigid offered her fox to the king in exchange for the prisoner's life. Now the king smilingly agreed and he even promised Brigid that never again would he inflict any kind of punishment on that workman, whose misdeed he would forget.

Brigid was very happy when the prisoner was restored to his wife and children. She went back home thanking God.

But the little fox missed her sorely and became restless and unhappy. It did not care where Brigid led him but, without her, the castle was a prison. After a while the king left on business and no one else bothered much about the new pet. The fox watched for its chance and when it found an open door, it made good its escape back to the woods.

The king returned and there was commotion when the pet was missed. The whole household was sent flying out to search for it. When they failed, the king's hounds were sent to help in the search, their keen noses snuffing over the ground for the fox's scent. Then the excited king summoned out his whole army, both horsemen and footmen, to follow the hounds in every direction. But it was all no use. When night fell, the hosts of Leinster returned wearily to their king with news of failure. Brigid's little pet fox was never found again.