

4095

Saint Bridget

Maura Reilly: Saint Bridget of Ireland was responsible for the start of convents and monasteries throughout Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries. Today she reigns as one of the most recognized saints in Ireland. Also known as Bride, Bridget of Ireland, Bride of the Isles, and Mary of the Gael, Saint Bridget is often associated with her pagan counterpart, Brigid, who was the Celtic goddess of poetry, healing, and metal arts. Her Celtic name, Brigid, means “fiery arrow.” This translation is symbolized throughout Saint Bridget’s *Dinner Party* place setting. A flame-like form appears in the vulvar motif found on the plate and can also be seen on the runner’s front in the capital letter *S* and on the back of the runner, surrounding the Celtic cross. The flame also represents the fire that nuns kept lit in honor of Saint Bridget after her death. The front panel of this runner is a wooden panel carved in a Celtic-knot motif; this material and the bark-colored silk used in the runner refer to the first convent founded by Bridget, called Kildare, or “the church of the oak.” Beneath this setting are inscribed the names of the other early Christian female leaders, including Genevieve and Thecla, among others.