

Imbolc Celebration

Imbolc Ritual

- I. Centering
- II. **Reading:** Invocation
- III. Cast The Circle
- IV. Song: Earth My Body, Water My Blood, Air My Breath and Fire
My Spirit
- V. **Reading:** History
- VI. Song: One Spirit In The Dark
- VII. Story: Caileach and Bride
- VIII. Breath of Life
- IX. Song: Invocation To Bridget
- X. Candle Dance:
 - A. Bridget as Flame
 - B. Processional Song: This Little Light of Mine
 - C. Candles: lit from center cauldron; each lights candle and dances
with it
 - D. Song: Spirit of Fire Come To Us
- XI. Meditation
- XII. Song: One Little Candle
- XIII. Opening The Circle
- XIV. Song: Hale and Farewell

Imbloc Invocation

This ritual is dedicated to Bridget, the Goddess of fire and inspiration; in Ireland, the Triple Goddess of poetry, smithcraft, and healing.

This is the feast of the waxing light. What was born at the Solstice begins to manifest, and we who were midwives to the infant year now see the Child Sun grow strong as the days grow visibly longer. This is the time of individuation: Within the measures of the spiral, we each light our own light, and become uniquely ourselves. It is the time of initiation, of beginning, when seeds that will later sprout and grow begin to stir from their dark sleep. We meet to share the light of inspiration, which will grow with the growing year.

Imbolc History

In the dim winter days of the early year there grows within all of us a longing for more light. In old Scotland February fell in the middle of a period known as the wolf month. Although the season was cold and dreary, small signs of new life began to appear: rams were born and soft rain brought new grass. Ravens began to build their nests and larks were said to sing with a clearer voice. The Cailleach, the Old Woman of Winter, was transformed into Bride, the Fair Woman of February, fragile yet growing stronger each day as the sun rekindled its fire. Bride with her white wand is said to breathe life into the mouth of the dead Winter and to bring him to open his eyes to the tears and the smiles, the sighs and the laughter of Spring. The venom of the cold is said to tremble for its safety on Brede's Day and to flee for its life on Patrick's Day.

In Ireland, Bridget is the triple goddess of poetry, healing, and smithcraft, all magical arts of transformation. As goddess, she kindles the flame of inspiration for works of beauty and wisdom, setting our minds ablaze with the passion to create. Being the patroness of smithcraft, she teaches us about the mysteries of art, how to transmute the dull metal of the mundane into something splendid through the skillful wielding of fire. Like the sun, her bright spirit brings an awareness of the possible into our lives and gives us the courage to act upon our dreams.

In some parts [of Ireland], women would place a piece of cloth outside on a bush on Saint Brigit's Eve. They believed that during the night the saint would pass by and touch the cloth, imbuing it with healing properties. It had magically turned into *brat Bride*, Brigit's mantle, which could bestow an easy labor and healthy babies on both women and animals giving birth.

Breath of Life

Thus does Bridgit breathe life into the mouth of dead winter. In some variations of the story, Bridgit does combat with Cailleach. In others, Cailleach journeys to a magic well at dawn on the first day of spring and upon looking at her image reflected in it or drinking from it, she is transformed into the maiden.

How to breathe life into that which seems dead? No easy task. Cup your hands together and hold them to your mouth. (Pause.) Inhale deeply. Now breathe a long, slow breath into your hands. Then close your hands together, holding the breath inside. How warm and alive it feels.

What transformation awaits us? What is wintering in us that needs to be breathed into life? What seeds are germinating? What ideas are hibernating? At its core the earth is warm, and that warmth is now rising. So too are our spirits. Let us silently consider how we might be receptive to the stirrings of the spirit.

Candle Dance

Early writers believed that Bridget's name stemmed from *breo-aigit*, "fiery arrow," a fitting name for a goddess of hearth, the forge, and the flame that burns within the hearts of poets. She was also guardian of an eternal flame that burned within a sacred enclosure at her abbey in Kildare. Stories about the flame's miraculous properties tell how it stayed alight, while the ashes from the burned wood never increased even though it burned for a thousand years, from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries. In 1993, Bridget's sacred flame was relit after four hundred years by the ancient order of Brigidine Sisters.

Take a candle and light it from Bridget's fire. Let it be a spark of hope, a promise of warmth and health, an inspiration to begin something that you've longed to do. Carefully guard that flame as you dance clockwise around the altar. If it goes out, call on Bridget to light it again.

Imbolc Meditation

Light your candle if it has gone out. Gaze into the flame for a few moments, then close your eyes. You will still see the image of the flame against your eyelids. Now imagine it growing brighter and brighter, and see yourself standing in a place filled with the warmth and light of red gold flames.

Imagine that you are standing in the entrance to a forge in a forest, where a blazing fire is roaring and in front of it stands a woman. Thick auburn hair is tied back, but a few rippling curls have escaped about her face. She is dressed in dark green with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, revealing strong arms. Bridget stands over a large anvil, beating a sheet of soft gleaming bronze with a great hammer. At last she looks up and smiles at you warmly. She has finished her creation and holds it up to the light of the fire for you to see. As you look at it, it continually changes shape: first it seems to be a leaf, then a globe, and now it has become a star. Bridget laughs deeply and tosses the star into the air, where it sails into the night sky and takes its place among the glittering constellations.

And now Bridget turns toward you and asks, What have you come to create? You tell her your vision, whether great or small, personal or for the whole community, and she beacons you over to the fire. As you look into the flames, pictures start to move and you see yourself at work, filled with enthusiasm and passion as you make your vision a reality. You and your creation are surrounded and shot through with the golden light of inspiration. Bridget is there too, watching over you with love as you work, encouraging you and filling you with confidence and creativity.

If any self doubt or fears start to arise, see Bridget surrounding you with her mantle of protection: a warm soft cloak of green that makes you feel safe and inviolable. Now see yourself with your vision turned into reality, feeling a sense of accomplishment and pride. Thank Bridget for showing you this vision, and ask her what your first step should be toward bringing it into reality.

When you have finished the conversation with her, see the forge suddenly glow even more brightly so that all forms and shapes, including that of Bridget herself, melt into a suffusion of golden light. And now see that the light is just the candle flame reflected on your eyelids. Slowly come back to the room. Open your eyes and write down what she has suggested. In the coming weeks, call upon Bridget to help keep your inspiration alight.