

Beltane Celebration

Altar

- Yellow flowers
- North: flowering plant; East: incense or tobacco; South: candle; West: water bowl
- Blueberries and strawberries

Procession

- Morris dancing
- Chant: Earth my body, water my blood

Casting The Circle

- Calling The Four directions

Invocation

- Winter and Summer* by Thomas Evans

Blessing of Fire

- Gathering Around Fire/Lighting of fire
 - Lighting of candles
- Historical context
 - Druid belief that fire connects human world to spiritual world
 - Dancing around fire for purification
- Dance around fire, singing Spirit of Fire Come To Us, We will Kindle The Fire

Blessing of Water

- Historical context
 - Dew gathered for healing and enabling
 - Sprinkling of people during May Day processions
 - Union of fire and water
- Sprinkling of participants
 - “May the waters of life cleanse your spirit.”
- Song: Born of water, cleansing, powerful; Healing, changing, we are

Blessing of Flowers

- Historical context
 - Gathering of yellow flowers to brighten and protect homes
 - Lovers exchange wreaths
 - Decorating May bush and May pole
- Decorating may bush
- Exchanging flowers
 - “May the light of the sun bring warmth into your life.”
- Song : Lusty Month of May

Meditation

- Circle with yellow crepe paper
- Water washes away old hopes and dreams
- Fire warms our spirit to new actions
- Flowers call us to senseless acts of joy and beauty

Opening of Circle

- Farewell to four directions
- Closing: Farewell To The Spirits

Invocation: Winter and Summer

By Thomas Evans

All the sweetness of nature was buried in black winter's grave,
And the wind sings a sad lament with its cold plaintive cry;
But oh, the teeming summer will come bringing life in its arms,
And will strew rosy flowers on the face of hill and dale,

In lovely harmony the wood has put on its green mantle,
And summer is on its throne playing its string-music;
The willows, whose harp hung silent when it was withered in winter,
Now gives forth its melody.
Hush! Listen! The world is alive!

Blessing of Fire

On Beltaine Eve the druids and their successors assembled on high hills with a view of the rising sun. They came to raise the great fires that would bring the power of the sun to Earth and to sanctify and purify the whole community and their livestock in readiness for the new cycle. Fire was an interface between the human race and the divine, in particular, the elemental powers of the Upperworld who would determine the fate of the herds, the flocks, and the growing harvest. Sacrificial offerings were cast into the fire to gain their goodwill, borne skyward on flames like hands uplifted in prayer.

The fire came like a blessing from the gods. From this magical flame the great bonfire was lit, and now the shadowy figures emerged from their darkened homesteads below the hill, driving their cattle before them.... The whole hillside came alive as the boys thrust brands of dried sedge and heather into the newly roaring flames and whirled them about their heads in imitation of the circling sun. Dancers spun in a ring. Young men leaped through the flames to *sain*, or protect, themselves and their livestock, while old folk slowly walked around the fire, muttering prayers....As the fire sunk low, the girls jumped across it to procure good husbands; pregnant women stepped through it to ensure an easy birth; and mothers carried their children across the smoldering ashes.

Blessing of Water

Young girls who rose before dawn to bathe in the dew were assured of a beautiful complexion, according to the old custom. But to early Celts, May dew had even more powerful effects than the purely cosmetic. Dew was regarded as having magical, life-giving properties that brought fertility to the fields.... Walking in May dew kept feet from becoming sore. Men who washed their hands in it became skilled in making knots and nets. In Scotland mothers wrapped their sick children in cloths soaked in the dew for its healing effect.... A number of May Day customs involved sprinkling people with water from holy wells and pools or other sources of water.

For at Beltaine it was as important to be *sained* by water as by fire. The element of fire belongs to the realm of Sky, the Upperworld, for it represents the sun; it is kindled with wood from sacred trees and its energy rises upward. Water belongs to the realm of Sea, the Earth, and its energy moves downward. These two elements are associated with the *sam* and *gam* of Celtic cosmology, and at the beginning of summer their power unites in a divine marriage that results in the fertility of all living beings on Earth, the “middle” kingdom.

Blessing of Flowers

Between sunset and sunrise at Beltaine, Irish children took to the fields to gather flowers as golden as the sun.... Yellow flowers were not just for decoration: as symbols of the life-giving sun, they were made into posies and tied to doors and windows, or their petals were scattered over the thresholds of house and byre as protection against the faeries, who were out in force at this turning point of the year. Some were kept in fragrant baskets that the children brought to the sick and elderly.... Flowers were also for lovers, who wove them into wreaths to exchange as gifts.

[Another reason to gather flowers was to decorate the May bush.] A bough or clump of tree... was decorated with flowers, ribbons, paper streamers, and other bright scraps of material. Colored eggshells, carefully saved by the children from the Easter festivities, were threaded on string, and sometimes a golden ball was hung from the bush, perhaps representing the sun.... Boys carrying green boughs and girls wearing garlands of flowers held hands and took part in a long serpentine dance around the May bush, as once their ancestors had circled around the Tree of Life at the center of an Iron Age settlement.

Meditation

- Stand in Circle, Holding Yellow Streamer
 - Sun is a circle
 - It provides warmth in a cold universe
 - It provides the energy that brings the Earth to life

- Think of the fire that we lit this evening
 - It gave us light and warmth
 - The fire warms our spirits to new actions
 - It burns away the dead wood
 - Think of something old and dead that you still cling to
 - Tradition or practice that no longer has meaning
 - A goal that is now impossible
 - A belief that no longer describes our experience
 - Let the Beltaine fire burn away that dead wood

- Think of the water that we sprinkled on each other
 - Water washes away the dirt of winter
 - Old beliefs that hold us back
 - Distractions that keep us from our goals
 - Water heals our wounds
 - It combines with the sun to bring us life.

- Think of the flowers that we shared and used to decorate the May bush [altar].
 - Flowers represent the sun and its conquest over winter
 - Flowers call us to senseless acts of joy and beauty
 - Flowers call us to cherish the sun that allows us to bloom