

Mabon: The Fall Equinox

Ritual

Altar: pieces of straw, firebox with bunched up newspaper, bowl of water, paper cups

Four directions: candle, incense, water bowl, stones

Invocation

Circle Cast

History

Libation: each person dips paper cup into bowl, and pours onto ground, giving thanks for some source of sustenance or transformation

Song: The Earth Is Our Mother

Burning of straw: each person identifies source of change, places straw in firebox

Dance: counterclockwise around fire, chanting "The Earth, the Wind , the Fire..."

Song: She Changes Everything She Touches

Story: Birth of Taliesin - Ceridwen's cauldron brings transformation

Meditation: Cauldron of Ceridwen

Circle opened

Invocation

This is the time of harvest, of thanksgiving and joy, of leave-taking and sorrow. Now day and night are equal, in perfect balance, and we give thought to the balance and flow within our own lives. The Sun King has become the Lord of Shadows, sailing West: we follow him into the dark. Life declines, the season of baroness is on us, yet we give thanks for that which we have reaped and gathered. We meet to turn the Wheel and to weave the cord of life that will sustain us through the dark.

History

Throughout the British Isles and Ireland great ceremony attended the cutting of the last sheaf, the last refuge of the harvest spirit. The sheaf was often braided into the shape of a woman and sometimes dressed in a gown. In the Highlands it was called the Maiden or the Hag, just as the Celtic goddess traditionally has two faces - of life and of death. At the end of the harvest everyone came together for the Maiden Feast, where the decorated sheaf sat in state and was offered the toast: "Here's to the one that helped us with the harvest!" Afterward it might be hung in the farmhouse for good luck through the winter or plowed back into the earth the following year. Sometimes it was kept to make Brede's "bed" at Imbolc, for the harvest goddess was another aspect of Brede herself.

Libation

[Each person dips paper cup into bowl, and pours onto ground, giving thanks for some source of sustenance or transformation.]

We have sown, we have tended,
We have grown, we have gathered,
We have reaped a good harvest.
Goddess, we thank you for your gifts,
God, we thank you for your bounty.
I thank you for _____.

Birth of Taliesin [tahl-yes-in]

Ceridwen [kair-id-wen]

- Lived in time of King Arthur by Bala Lake in North Wales
- Mistress of the three arts: magic, enchantment, divination
- Daughter Creirwy [kry-rooy] Dear One: fair as the moon upon the water
- Son Morfran [mor-vrahn] Black Crow: ugly and misshapened

Cauldron of Inspiration and Knowledge

- C sought to bring brightness to son's life
- Consulted lore, gathered herbs, brewed them in cauldron for year and a day
- Blind man, Morda, tended fire; boy, Gwion, stirred pot
- End of year: three drops fall on Gwion's thumb
- Gwion enlightened; C pursues

Chase

- G becomes hare; C becomes greyhound - hare fast, greyhound faster
- G comes to lake, becomes salmon; C becomes otter - salmon fast, otter faster
- G leaps into air, becomes crow; C becomes hawk - crow fast, hawk faster
- G becomes grain of sand, drops to threshing floor: C becomes black hen, eats G

Rebirth

- C bears boy in nine months; plans to kill, places in leather coracle, takes to ocean
- G floats for many years, not age a day
- Fisherman catches coracle; notes baby's bright brow
- T recognizes name; becomes greatest poet and prophet

The Inner Cauldron: Transformation

Often our lives become transformed by unexpected events, as Gwion's was when he ingested the magical drops by accident. That is when Ceridwen, keeper of the cauldron of changes, begins to hunt us down, forcing us to be fluid, to adapt, to shape-shift into new roles that challenge our ideas of who we are. A marriage ends, we lose a job - whatever hook we have hung our identity on is suddenly snatched away - and, like Gwion, we are plunged into the womb of the goddess to be remade.

Meditation: Ceridwen's Cauldron

Think about something in your life you would like transformed. This could be a feeling, a situation, a relationship, a habit, or anything that you know needs to be regenerated. Write this down on a piece of paper and keep it by you as you journey to meet Ceridwen, Mother of Changes.

You are standing at the edge of a lake, and looking across at the setting sun. The sun silhouettes a circular house with a tall conical roof out of which a curl of smoke is rising. You walk around the lake and are met at the door of the house by a dark browed boy of fourteen. He is Morfran, Ceridwen's son. He pulls back the skins that cover the door, allowing you to enter. The inside is lit only by the fire that is heating a large cauldron. A middle-aged woman is stirring the pot; she wears a long, crimson robe, and her hair is braided in two thick plaits, one black and one white. By her side stands her daughter, a slender girl of sixteen, with yellow hair that curls over her shoulders.

Ceridwen straightens and looks directly at you, asking what you wish to have transformed. You show her the paper and she tells you to cast it into the steaming brew. When the roiling water settles, you look into the cauldron and see the transformation. You see the people involved and hear what they think of it. You enter the transformed situation and notice how different you feel.

Then the girl comes forward holding in her hands a chalice on which many animals and birds are traced in silver. Ceridwen dips a ladle into the cauldron and pours some of the potion into the chalice, and her daughter offers it to you saying, "This is the elixir of Anwen, the Breath of Life. May you be transformed." You drink the liquid and immediately feel refreshed and filled with a sense of hope for the future and a strong sense of positive change.

And now it is time for you to leave, so you thank the two women and walk around to the door, which Morfran is once more holding open. As you pass through, you become more and more aware that you are standing here, in this place and this time, and you come all the way back to the present, opening your eyes and feeling refreshed and alert.