

t Imbolc/Candlemas 2011 with Treibh na Tintean t

Blessings of this wild winter season! ...The snow (those white bees) has been flying...and the ground is covered thick with silence and dreaming. Here in the upper Midwest, the season of Imbolc is an undeniably freezing season, tinged every so slightly with the promising melt beneath the white ground, the slate-colored lakes, and the gray sky... the smell of moss beneath snow, the advent of snowdrops and candlelight. There is a serpent that lives in the earth, and it turns over in its winter sleep and opens one great eye for a heartbeat moment, revealing prophecy and announcing the coming of Kore in spring. Dreams and hopes, a season of meditation and prayer.

There is a rich *culp* quality to this time of year, celebrating the seed of one season in what feels like the heart of another... At Imbolc, it's the exaltation of fire in a season when the blanket of snow is at its most insistent. An explosion of poetry and song, the ringing sound of the smithy, the smoke in the clean and freezing air, coupled with the sweet and weighty hush of long and ancient nights, the bundle of bones beneath coats and scarves, the wind that whips words away from lips so quick it's best to keep speaking at a minimum... both bells and silence simultaneously it seems. And of course, we in the northern climes spend much of this time of year with our eyes turned yearningly towards the promise of crocuses and hyacinths. Wishing for birdsong. It seems as though the earth itself holds its breath in anticipation.

The glorious planet turns, friends, and the sun gathers its strength. The serpent turns and the people throw their arms out toward the coming light. May your celebrations be joyous and may your ears ring with poetry! All best and blessings during this season of ice and fire!

-Ruby Sara, Editor-in-Chief, "The Temple Bell"

Making Butter

Cleansing—Brigid's Well—(*Dip your finger into Brigid's Well, bless yourself & then the person right behind you.*)

Directions

EAST: Powers of Air, Guardians of the Watchtower of the East—winds that fan the fires of the forge, winds that cool the brow of the Smith, winds of ancient knowledge of smith craft, of metals and of stones—come to this circle tonight. So mote it be!

NORTH: Powers of Earth, Guardians of the Watchtower of the North—minerals of the earth, steel and stone, wood and bronze, gold and charcoal, hammer and anvil, sword and shield, helm and torc, enduring matter that was before and will endure after all else has past—come to this circle tonight. So mote it be!

WEST: Powers of Water, Guardians of the Watchtower of the West—liquid that quenches the hot metal to temper it, cool draught which quenches thirst after the heat of the forge, cleanliness of the ritual bath—come to this circle tonight. So mote it be!

SOUTH: Powers of Fire, Guardians of the Watchtower of the South—flame of forge that heats the iron, flame which melts apart and welds together, flame that transforms the metal that it may be worked, flame which hardens so that all else will yield before its sharpness and strength—come to this circle tonight. So mote it be!

SPIRIT: We invoke the Sacred Three: Maiden, Mother, Crone...To save, to shield...To surround...The hearth, the house...All the household...This eve, this night...And every night...Each single night. So mote it be!

Casting—(*All*) We cast this circle as sons and daughters, / Spinners and weavers, / Tool makers, potters; / As dancers and dreamers, / Fixers, changers, / Singers and screamers. / We cast this circle with our ancestors and guardians, / God and Goddess too, / You who teach and who speak true, / Who plant, who reap, / Who soar, who creep, / Who cook, who drum, / Who have been and yet to come, / Unreasonable women, / Unmanageable men. / We cast as pagan, druid and witches, / Loving hearts or furious bitches. / We are sweet water, we are the seed; / We are the storm wind to blow away greed. Into this circle we bring to birth / the love that reclaims our earth.

Covenant —(*All*) As we gather here, in our sacred space, a circle is formed and we are connected in spirit. So mote it be.

Invocation—(All)

Brigid: O Mother of Poetry, teach us Your art, that Your inspiration may enter each heart. O Mistress of Magic that stands by the fire and shapes the bright metal to the form You desire— Mother of Smithcraft—please teach us Your art, that the power of changing may enter each heart. You kindle the springtime to quicken the earth, from under Your mantle the old has new birth, O Mother of Healing, please teach us Yours truly, art, that peace and contentment may enter each heart. g

Horned God: From the veiled mists of the Grove, we call thee. Your antlers ride the sky, Horned One, and carry with them the legacy of Kingship. Come to my side, Lord of the Forests, bring Your strength and stability that are the mountains rising high. Bring Your joy and ecstasy, that we might know Your nature. Come to this ritual and be with us tonight. _

Invocation to the Groundhog – (Denise) Like the dormant seed in winter, you come forth tentatively, sniffing lightly the faint smell of rebirth as it grows imperceptibly in the winter wind. Predictor of weather, Predictor of change, may your sleep only be disturbed for auspicious reasons. May your rest only be broken to herald in the new, the fresh and that which is waiting to be born. As servants of the seasons, We greet you and wait for spring, We welcome you and wait for the returning sun.

Sweeping the Circle – (All) (*Move to the edges of our circle, spread out evenly; pass the besom and sweep the part of the circle you are standing in, then pass it on. Repeat prayer until finished.*)

- Brigit of the mantles, Brigit of the twining hair, Brigit of the peat heap, Brigit of the augury,
- We ask of Thee the sacred three: to save, to shield, to surround the hearth.
- Brigit of the white palms, Brigit of the kindness, Brigit of the calmness, Brigit of the kine,
- We ask the three while in Your sight, bless our hearth each single night.

Brigid's Flame

Mike: Fire of the heart, Fire of the mind...

Denise: Fire of the hearth, Fire of the wind...

Sandy: Fire of the Art, Fire out of time!

Richard: She shines for all, she burns in all!

(Joe lights the candle on the altar.)

Scott: For more than nine hundred years the flame of Brigit burned in her shrine at Kildare, tended first by the priestesses of the goddess, and then by the Catholic sisters of the saint. In the year 1220, the bishop ordered it extinguished. *(Joe blows out candle.)*

Richard: Soon it was relit *(Joe lights it).*

Sandy: It burned until the Reformation, during the reign of King Henry the Eighth, and was extinguished again, and the abbey was destroyed *(Joe blows out candle).*

Denise: In 1996 the flame was lit again in Kildare, *(Joe lights candle).*

Mike: The darkness of ignorance and fear may well put it out again one day (*Joe blows it out*).

Scott: But the true flame was not in Ireland; the true flame is the Goddess, and her fire is never lost. (*Joe lights it again!*)

Candle Blessing—(*All*) We bless thee creatures of wax and light and cast out negativity. Serve your purpose, flaming bright, infused with magic, you shall be. Instruments of light & strength, wick & wax though you may be, I give you life of needed length to aid in creativity!

19 Candles for Brigid – *A dedication, invocation & celebration:*

F - Your first candle lit is your sunrise birth, the flame of your house reaching Ceugant's brow.

D - Second is the spark of your union with Bress, son of Elathan.

M - Third is the pillar of fire as you took the veil, rising high and clear.

R - Fourth is eternal life's spring that sings your name in crystal gaze.

S - Fifth are brothers: Dagda the father, Broadb the Red, Medar, Ogma and Aenghus.

F - Sixth is the flame on your altar that never dies.

D - Seventh is the grove at Llandwynwn, on Mora's shore, where lovers tryst.

M - Eight is the strength of your oxen of Dil—Fea and Fernea, the red and the black.

R - Ninth is the sigh of your breath as new life grows from old, your bridge of Truth.

S - Tenth is a milk white cow, of red ears, the Earth Mother's nectar, sweet.

F - Eleventh is a girdle that spans night and day, yet heals all and remains.

D - Twelfth is a veil of truth in flowering thorn, your weary path.

M - Thirteenth is your son Ruardan to be reborn.

R - Fourteenth is the white light of the flowering word, born at sunrise.

S - Fifteenth is the grove at Kildare, with solid oak and crystal spring.

F - Sixteenth are the shrines throughout Aibion, in Church, Well and Wall.

D - Seventeenth is your will, of black iron, forged in the determination of 1000 eyes.

M - Eighteenth is a healing—the white dog at the portal, the chalice of your smile.

R - Nineteenth is a clarach, which spells—hours, days and signs, all in a silver bough.

S Your last is your first, the beginning of the turning sea, and the ending of the three. The dancing sun in the hearts of all! The candle that never dies!

Communion

Thanking the Directions

EAST: Powers of Air, Guardians of the Watchtower of the East, we thank you for blessing us. We in turn bless you as you return to your realm.

NORTH: Powers of Earth, Guardians of the Watchtower of the North, we thank you for blessing us. We in turn bless you as you return to your realm.

WEST: Powers of Water, Guardians of the Watchtower of the West, we thank you for blessing us. We in turn bless you as you return to your realm.

SOUTH: Powers of Fire, Guardians of the Watchtower of the South, we thank you for blessings us. We in turn bless you as you return to your realm.

SPIRIT: May the holy maiden Bride protect you from all dangers. No fire, no sun, no moon will burn you, No lake, no water, no sea shall drown you, No arrow or fairy nor dart of fay shall wound you.

ALL: May Brigit's waters heal you. May Brigit's winds inspire you. May Brigit's fire warm you. Under her protection, go in peace.

ALL: The circle is open, but unbroken. May the peace of Brigit be ever with you. Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again!

Toast to the Groundhog -- Groundhog's Day comes but once a year, We lift our glasses now in cheer. We drink this frothy mug of beer and say "Welcome Groundhog—Glad You're Here!"

Burning the Greens - as we add them to the fire, say- "The fire of Brigit is the flame on my hearth; the fire of Brigit is the flame in my heart."