



# From the Edges and Hedges

The Coalition of Earth Religions/CERES  
[www.ceres-wnc.org](http://www.ceres-wnc.org)

Imbolc, 2008  
Volume 1 Issue 3

## For Imbolc

by Susie Mamola

Spring oozes from my fingertips coloring everything I touch, defiant against the crone's desperate grasps at pulling me back into her dark winter cloak I stand, goose pimpled, in the early blush of light. I weave with tanzanite briolettes and olivine crystals a song of Inanna's glory, charming her from the depths. We emerge together, winter-worn and stiff, sniffing the air for the perfume of softening earth and rejoice in the feeling of sap rising in our bones!

## Motherhood Book of Shadows

by Ginger Strivelli

This season the kids and I have been making charms. One particular good one to make with kids is a prayer bead locket charm.

The Witchlings can make their own beads with polymer clay or baked clay or even dried play dough. You need 13 (Representing the 13 lunar cycles in one solar cycle to honor both Goddess and God energy) large beads. Don't forget to make the holes before you bake or dry your beads by running a needle through them. You can mark the beads with protective runes or symbols or even power words. Make the beads colored and designed to fit your prayer's intention. (In example; for a prayer to keep rain from canceling your teams next game, use sunshine shaped golden beads.)

Take the 13 beads and place onto a string. (Silk embroidery thread or dental floss works nicely.) Add a locket to the string. (You can get these in the jewelry findings section of a craft store.)

Then on a tiny slip of paper, write out a prayer to be repeated when using the prayer beads.

(continued on pg 4)

## Healing, Midwifery, Smithcraft, Fire, Beer, Bread, Weaving—What Isn't Brid a Goddess Of?

by Byron Ballard

### The Festival:

The next holy day on the Wheel of the Year is the festival of Brid, which has many names—Bridnasadh, Imbolc, Brigid, the Festival of New Fire, Oimelc or Candlemas. She came out of the Indus valley in the great Indo-European migrations and left her footprints all along the way. Brigid made a transformation in Ireland and went from Goddess to wonder-working saint and back again, all the while retaining her essential nature, making her a perfect bridge between Pagan and Christian worship.

### Her Name:

Her vast array of responsibilities and honorifics may also play a part in her name. Ancient deities tend to have more than one name—they are honored by different names in different locales and their names have sometimes changed down through the centuries and in many cases have been Anglicized. Bridey, Brigid and Brid. She is also called Bride, Brigit, Brigitta, Biddy, Brighid and Brigantia. There's a figure in Haitian Voudou Maman Brigitte, who may also be one of her manifestations.

### Daily practice:

Set your altar with white and red, the colors of Brigid. Go for simplicity (I always give this advice but rarely take it)—a pretty candle, some flowers, a statue of Brigid, a Brigid's Wheel/cross. If you're lucky enough to have some of that peat incense from Ireland, burn a bit of that. Sitting down at your home altar or in your garden, with a cup of tea, is a good way to either start or end the day.

Blessing the House: (continued on pg 2)

(Continued from pg 1) Brigid, in her guise as the Bride, comes at night, to visit and bless the household. Children put out soft beds for her near the hearth and leave a dish of milk or oats for the cow who is her traveling companion. When my daughter was small, she would make an elaborate bed out of a shoe or other small box. It was usually hand-decorated or painted. The cow leaves the child a small present and Brigid leaves her blessing and her protection.

### **Brigid's Eternal Flame:**

The flame had been extinguished during Henry VIII (as I recall) and was relit in the Market Square in Kildare Town in 1993. It was tended by the Brigidine nuns in nearby Dara Park until 2006, when a beautiful sculpture was erected in the square to house it. For more info on Solas Bhríde and its upcoming Feile Bhríde festivities, visit the website at <http://www.solasbhríde.ie>

### **The Wheel or Cross:**

One of the symbols of the Goddess/Saint Brigid is the Brigid's Cross. It is a four-armed solar wheel and for that reason is sometimes called a Brigid's Wheel. It's easy to show you how to make one but very hard to explain how it's done, so I've found a site with relatively clear instructions. Here's the URL—

<http://www.spirited-ireland.net/articles/st.brigids-cross/>

Once you've created your own Wheel, you should put it above your doorway or above your hearth (or cookstove) to keep you safe from fire.

### **The Bhrat:**

We are under the cloak of Brigid. *Faoi bhrat Bhríde sinn.*

Our wonder-working Goddess/saint has many tales attributed to her in one or both of her incarnations. One of my favourites comes from her saint persona. She's a far-seeing woman and wants to open a double monastic center in county Kildare—one part for women, another for men. So she goes to the King of Ireland and asks for some land in the Curragh for her convent. The Curragh is a large expanse where sheep graze and race horses are trained and raced. The king had some doubts about the whole endeavor and denied her request. Then

she asked if he'd grant her all the land that her cloak could cover and he smiled and agreed. Then her super-fab magical cloak kept growing and growing until it covered the entire Curragh and the king gave in, knowing her magic was way better than his. (And probably knowing that she had the ability, as a Goddess, to remove his kingship entirely.)

The folklore attached to this story is that on the eve of Brigid's festival, you leave a piece of cloth outside to collect the night's dew. Throughout the year, this cloth (called the bhrat) is used for healing and prayer, being especially effective for eye ailments.

### **Clouties:**

Clouties are European prayer flags. They are little shreds of cloth that are tied to the branches of trees and shrubs, often overhanging watering places like wells, springs and ponds. We hold the strip in our fists and whisper into it our request or our thanksgiving for a particular thing. Then it is tied and the prayer is said aloud. Sometimes small charms are attached to the cloutie, representing what is being asked for or the thing

for which we are grateful.

The strip is left, fluttering in the breeze about the spring, to do its work. Some folks say that the prayer is answered when the cloth strip rots and drops into the spring.

### **Well-Dressing:**

In many different cultures and locations, country folk have been adorning springs and wells for a long, long time. We think this was originally done to honor the spirits of the water and the seemingly miraculous fact that water simply sprang out of the earth.

Well-dressings are often floral and herbal tributes that encircle the well- or spring-head. There are plenty of perennial evergreen herbs that are available in the Zone 7 garden this time of year—I have catnip, rosemary, horehound, lamb's-ears and parsley, to name a few. You can tie them into pretty bundles and arrange them around or near the spring.



## Descent to a Dark Goddess

by Cassandra Shine

Descent rituals have three-fold benefits:

- ◆ To connect with, revere, and receive the blessings of a Dark Goddess (and/or Cthonic God);
- ◆ To undergo a ritual of shedding our outer layers to get to our core selves, challenging our ability to release our egos
- ◆ To celebrate the darker season in an Esbat or Sabbat.

A descent rite is a ritual designed after one of the ancient myths of Goddess descent. My personal favorite is the Sumerian myth of Innana's descent to the Great Below where she meets her dark sister, Ereshkigal. I have found greater depth and personal meaning in this version than in others that depict a Goddess meeting a God and receiving her power from Him.

Though I include the masculine in my practice of Wicca, my insights have led me to see that neither gender borrows or received their power from the other. Each gender's Divine energy and various Deities are their own independent powers in their own right, and it is in their meetings that 'Something' genderless and greater than the whole is created. A Great Rite, marriage of Goddess and God is one form. The duality of Oak and Holly King is another common form. But the Innana/Ereshkigal descent myth and rituals is the form of Maiden to Dark Goddess, twin souls reflecting each other.

As this is the Imbolg letter, Imbolg is something of the last best chance to gather the energies of winter and meet a Cthonic Divinity in Her Great Below abode. Highland Wild Coven, though we begin to connect with darker, introspective Gods at the onset of Fall, has designated this transitional Sabbat as our best time for a detailed and intense descent ritual. We felt that Ereshkigal could be honored, and Inanna awoken before looking forward to Spring and lighter times. Especially here in these Appalachian mountains, February is often the coldest, windiest, and bleakest month, and we honor that on the February eve Sabbat. Ereshkigal's blessings may be intense, but She shows us how to lighten our egos.

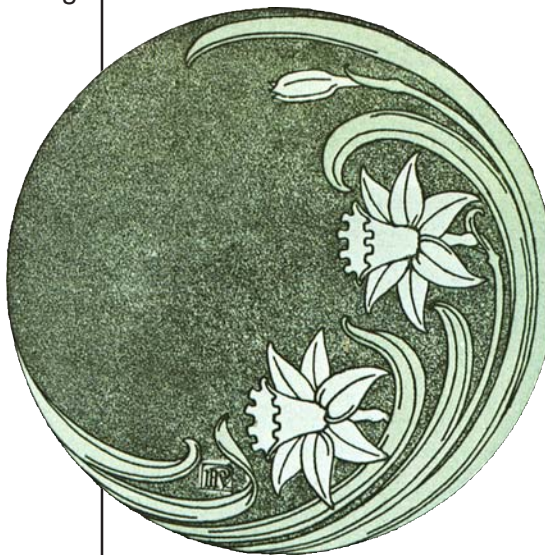
## A Movie for Imbolc

by Teleri ferch Nyfain

My favorite Rogers & Hammerstein musical is *Flower Drum Song*. Made in 1961, starring Linda Kwan, James Shigeta & Jack Soo, this film follows the fortunes of a young Chinese mail-order bride brought illegally to San Francisco.

As with other R & H musicals, this has a darker theme underlying the light-hearted romance of mixed up couples and interfering parents. Miyoshi Umeki, as the young girl Mei Li, radiates sweetness, beauty, and seemingly obedience. She gradually leaves her passivity as she embraces American culture. Linda Kwan's character, on the other hand, finds that not everything about her homeland is horrible. They both end up with the men they want (big shock) in a funny, tuneful trip.

Immigration makes headlines currently, and this film reminds us that this is nothing new. Assimilation versus cultural identity has been an ongoing problem from the first step on shore of the Pilgrims (or those convicts in Georgia). Exploiters of those desperate to find a better life, and the disillusioned who find the tales of streets paved with gold to be lies, have always been a part of our culture. These



things appear from a Chinese angle in *Flower Drum Song*, without resolution except for the main characters. I feel this is a good movie for Imbolc because of the way hope rises improbably from what should be horribly depressing situations, and the spirits of the women in this

film shine with determination. They believe in promises, and themselves embody those promises, giving a real insight into why so many people endured, still endure, such hardships to come to our country.

## Urania's Well: Astrology for Changing Times

By Diotima Mantineaia

### Imbolc to Ostara 2008

Yes, yes, Mercury is retrograde, can you tell? The newsletter is late!

With any luck, this Mercury retrograde in Aquarius – touched by an eclipse, happening while Venus and Jupiter are strutting together through Capricorn, and nudged by Mars going direct in communicative Gemini – will finally lead to a grassroots backlash against the repetitive, nauseating coverage of celebrity shenanigans in the media, and stimulate some substantive discussion about the problems we are facing in the world. Or perhaps I am being too optimistic.

Whatever, remember that Mercury retrograde is not all bad. It can be helpful if you are revisiting issues/situations that should have been resolved in the past, but weren't. But don't lose sight of its usual reputation for communications breakdowns, and double-check all emails, contracts, etc. Since it is in Aquarius, major technology breakdowns are also probable. It turns direct on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Pluto moved into Capricorn a few days before Imbolc, and, after a brief retreat into Sagittarius during the summer and fall of this year, it will be in Capricorn until 2024. During this time, we'll see deep transformation of governments and large institutions, and the corporatocracy that seems to have finally consolidated its hold on us by working hand-in-glove with world governments, may (hopefully!) crumble to the ground. What we will build from the rubble Pluto leaves in its wake as it goes through Capricorn is something we should all be thinking about long and hard. Uranus and Neptune in mutual reception continue to support creative and spiritual envisioning of the future – look where those transits are happening in your chart to help determine in what areas of your life you might seek visions for yourself and the world.

The "Aries Point" (AP), which is 0 degrees of the cardinal signs, is a particularly sensitive spot in the Zodiac, and Mars will trigger Pluto at the AP early in March. Mars and Pluto tend to be an explosive combination – look for major issues of power and authority brought to the forefront on a world stage

and in your personal life. I suspect we may also see issues of energy usage brought to our attention in a big way – particularly nuclear.

This period also encompasses two eclipses (they always occur in pairs), a solar (new Moon) eclipse at 18° Aquarius, and a lunar (full Moon) eclipse at 2° Virgo. These are powerful, total eclipses, and are closely aligned with Neptune in Aquarius and Saturn in Virgo. As always, check the house position and planetary contacts of all these transits in your own chart to determine the areas of your life that will be affected.

---

### Invocation to Brigid

Is tú mo mhúscailt aiteasach ar maidin,  
Is tú an dúchtaint thobann ar an ngealaigh,  
Is tú an eagla bhuan ná codlann náall;  
Is tú lá 'le Bríde ag leathadh dóirse an Earraigh,  
An anaithe mhilse fhágas m'anam faon.  
Ta failte rohat.

You are my joyful awakening in the morning,  
You are the sudden darkening of the moon,  
You are the ever-present fear which knows  
no sleep;  
You are Brigid's day opening up the doors  
of spring,  
The sweet storm that leaves my soul  
exhausted.

You are welcome.

*From the Carmina Gaedelica*

---

### Motherhood Book of Shadows

(Continued from pg 1)

(In example: "Lord Apollo help me do well in band this semester, so I will be invited to take honors band class next year.") Use a pentagram or other power symbol before and after the sentence. Then cut this into a thin strip of paper, and roll it tightly into a small scroll. Place this prayer paper inside the locket.

This charm can be worn like a bracelet or necklace (depending on the size of bead and extra string used) or just hung on a peg by your bed or desk. To use the charm you recite the prayer one time for each bead as you roll it between your fingers.

