

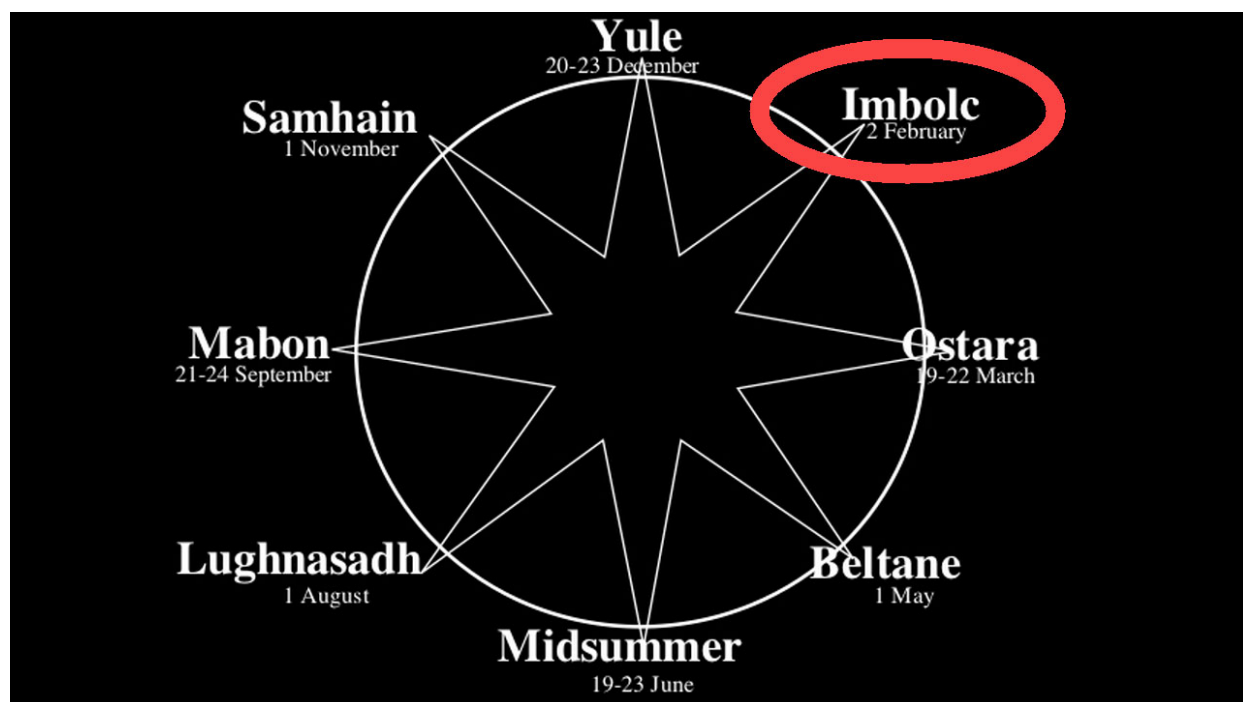
Ancient Sea Island Continuum

— Imbolc —

February 2, 2020

Today is Imbolc, the day of midwinter, halfway between the winter solstice and spring equinox. Imbolc is one of the four principal festivals of the Celtic calendar, celebrated either at the beginning of February. The cold has begun to fade away, and the days grow longer.

The alignment of Neolithic monuments, containing inner chambers illuminated by the rising sun on this date substantiates the ancient character of this celebration. The earliest Irish literature confirms the existence of this holiday in pre-Christian times.



The name Imbolc (pronounced IM-MOLK) derives from the Old Irish word for "in the belly" to the pregnancy of ewes. A medieval glossary confirms the word "ewe's milk". This is a time in which the earth is quickening, like the womb of the Great Mother, birthing the element of fire after the darkness.

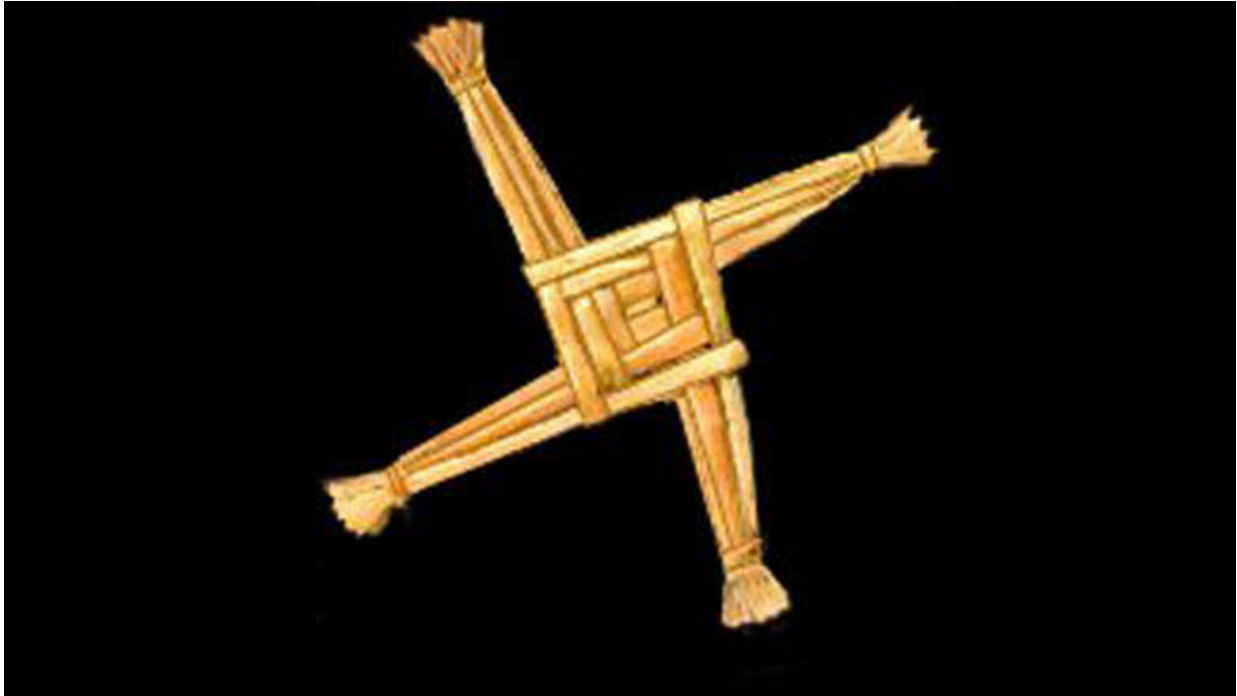


Many traditions exist with Imbolc, but foremost are the association of the festival with a distinctly feminine deity or saint named Brigid, Brigid is the Goddess of Poetry, Healing, Smithcraft, and Midwifery. If you can make it with your hands, Brigid rules it. She is a triple Goddess, so we honor her in all her aspects.



IMBOLC CRAFTS

The cross has long been a symbol of Brighid, the Irish goddess who presides over hearth and home. In the Christian period, Imbolc was adopted as St Brigid's Day. A Brighid's cross consists of rushes woven into a shape with a square in the middle and four arms protruding from each corner. They were often hung over doors, windows and stables to welcome Brighid and protect the buildings from fire and lightning. The crosses were generally left there until the next Imbolc.



In some legends, the girl who became St. Bridget wove the first of these crosses as she explained Christianity to her father, a Pictish chieftain. In other stories, the cross is not a cross at all, but a wheel of fire, which explains why it's a bit off-center in appearance. In parts of Ireland, Brighid is known as a goddess of the crossroads, and this symbol represents the place where two worlds meet, and the year is at a crossroads between light and dark.

In Ireland and Scotland, girls and young women would make a doll-like figure of Brighid, called a Biddy, made from rushes or reeds. It would be clad in bits of cloth, shells and/or flowers. Here is a picture of the morning after one of ASIC's earliest Imbolc celebration showing the bed Amanda made for the Goddess. Today, people still make Brighid's crosses and Biddys or visit holy wells dedicated to the Goddess and to St Brighid on Imbolc.



Imbolc is a celebration of power of fire for light and purification, an increased capability for introspection and insight into the future by scrying into a reflection, and weather divination. In fact, the old tradition of watching to see if serpents or badgers came from their winter dens on this day is considered a forerunner to the North American celebration of Groundhog Day.



People long ago assumed that animals have the ability to sense the future. Whether noticing the amount of squirrel activity as an indication of the strength of the coming winter, or ants building up their mounds days before a significant rain

event, people have tried to extend their powers of observation using the activities of animals, such as the augurs.



An augur holding a lituus, the curved wand often used as a symbol of augury on Roman coins

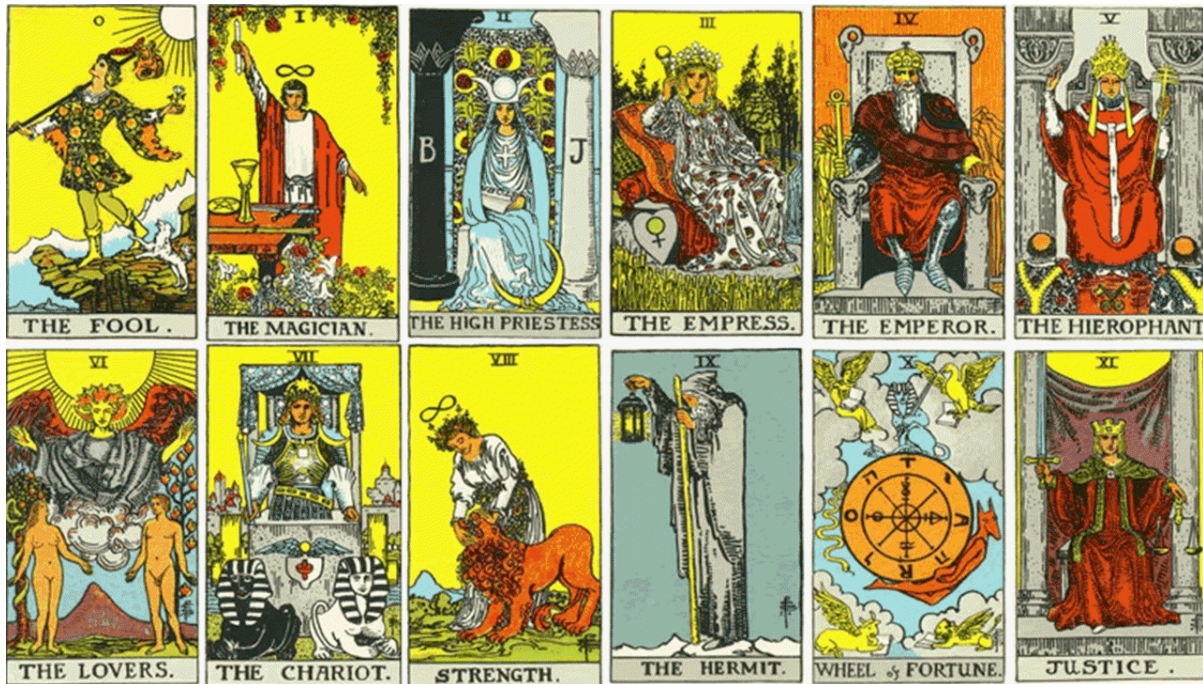


Vespasian denarius 71-73 AD
AVGVR references the tribunician power of the emperor
Wikimedia: Hermann Junghans

Other humans sensed that tossing or randomly choosing symbols or figures of text, such as runes.



As our technology advanced, printed symbols such as tarot became common for forecasting.



And in a complete abstraction of mystery and logic, others, yet today, indulge in bibliomancy.



Yet it seems that the Transcendentalists rediscovered the beauty and the wonder of Nature.



We could simplify the technology into a scrying bowl filled with or polished black mirror.



Yet, sometimes simplicity provides the clearest focus for our minds when we search for future directions.



Now let us use the power of our intent and the sacred space we have created to embrace the magick of Brighid.

QUARTER CALLS

In the old days, people gathered for public worship inside wooden henges, and later stone henges. The size of the circle indicated how many people lived in that village. As we summon the elements, focus on the positive energies in your life, and banish negative feelings from your soul. For instance, as the Guardian of each element is called, imagine a positive moment in your life when you were in direct contact with corresponding element being welcomed.

As our circle turns from North to East to South to West, imagine a protective bubble growing around us. For this ritual to have meaning, Pagans extend ourselves spiritually, a state that may make some feel vulnerable. But in this state of mind, we will be able to gain the clarity to truly look inward, free of outside influences. So now... come to the center of our Imbolc circle, clear your minds... of worries... of doubts... of superstitions... of religious beliefs. Let your concentration focus on.... you and everything positive about your life. Now we will finish the creation of our sacred space.

Hail, Earth, I call upon thee.

Changeless power of nurtured discipline,
You provide stability with endless endurance
Solid, firm, and steadfast.

We honor and invite you to join us here this morning.

And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

Hail, East, I call upon thee.

Power over Air, bringer of creativity, intuition, and clarity
You scatter the seeds of plants and ideas across the land;
You bring the moisture of the storms to the shore;

We honor and invite you to join us here this morning.

And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

Hail, Fire. I call upon thee.

Fires of love, feeling, and fortitude
Fueling the passions driving us
With courage, strength, and conviction

We honor and invite you to join us here this morning.

And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

Hail, Water. I call upon thee.

Waters of healing intervention,
Soothing us with your gentle calm and reviving our spirits
You are the life force surging through our veins

We honor and invite you to join us here this morning.

And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

Dearest goddess, in whom we live and move,
be present now within this sacred place.
Mother of mystery who rules the seas

and the tides of emotion within women and men,
may the flow of thy being be present within us,
guiding us to truth and love and light.
Mother of earth, goddess of the green and fertile land,
show to us your divine vision and grant us thy wisdom.

Bless these candles,
let their flames live within us
and let their light guide us during our journeys.

Bless these gifts,
may the love and compassion shown to them come full circle
with treasured rewards of endless beauty within them
and within ourselves.

MAGICK

Priestess

Bright Blessings at midwinter to all.
Brigid has returned with the sacred flame,
watching over hearth and home.
This is a time of rebirth and fertility,
and as the earth grows full of life,
may you find abundance on your own path.
Allow the warmth of my hearth to embrace you.
Allow the light of my flame to guide you.
Allow the love of my blessing to protect you.
And allow the waters to replenish your spirit.
This is a gift of new light to fill your home with love.

CLOSING WORDS

Priestess

That which is in the past is in the past
The veil of darkness has been lifted
New life beckons and we shall heed its call
Full of compassion, wisdom, and courage.
As the spark of the universe is revealed again
and soon we will bask in the warmth of the sun's light.



*The Earth-Centered Spiritual Affinity Circle
of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort
178 Sams Point Road, Beaufort, SC 29907*

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