

Imbolc

"And when through the Earth they felt the Stirring,
They sang songs encouraging the tiny seeds to grow."

-Jill Yarnall



Imbolc has been called the celebration of the *Divine Spark of Inspiration*. The magic that phrase evokes is so awesome, I could simply leave it at that. You are welcome to stop reading, grab your journal and *write* what this means to you.

As the winter cross quarter festival in Celtic culture, Imbolc marks the reawakening Earth. She comes to us mid-Aquarius and is usually celebrated around February 1st in the Northern Hemisphere. Like other cross quarter festivals however, I encourage you to seek out the moon phase that you most associate with this season and celebrate then. For me, it is the New Moon. Therefore I will celebrate Imbolc on the New Moon that is closest to the mid-Aquarius mark.

The cross quarter festivals are opportunities to tune into the developing energy of a new season. During these Winter months we are listening in and gaining wisdom. Imbolc offers us potential to tap into this wisdom and activate it, dreaming it forth for the new growth to come. The light is returning, growing stronger since Winter Solstice and in certain parts of the world new shoots might already be showing up. For most of us though, we are still in deep winter snows and green only exists in our sweetest dreams. Still, light *is* returning and life above and below ground is busy in preparation for Spring.

The word Imbolc finds its roots from Irish Gaelic "in the belly" relating to the spring pregnancy of the ewes. In Celtic traditions, Imbolc is an ancient woman's ceremony and the Goddess Brigid is honored at this time. She is keeper of the sacred fires of intuition, inspiration and divination. She was honored and worshiped at wells and springs; the holy waters of the Mother's womb and is therefore also a goddess of childbirth and healing. She was also said to be the preserver of poetry and song. The worship of the Goddess was transferred to the Virgin Mary by the church and Imbolc was renamed Candlemas. Imbolc honors and celebrates sexuality, fertility and the new growth it brings, while Candlemas became known as the "purification" for the 40 days that Mary remained *unclean* after the birth of Jesus. I take back Imbolc for Mary as sister and daughter of Brigid.

As the days begin to lengthen and signs of the Earth stirring show themselves to us, our sacred fires of inspiration begin to burn. We begin to dream and plan and *plant* our ideas in the cold Earth to allow for

germination. The time is ripe for creative acts through music, song, poetry, and art, and while in this in-between space of deep dark and returning light all forms of divination are very potent.

Imbolc has been a time of initiation and reclaiming since ancient days. Her solar fire matches our inner fire and encourages us to live into our vision. Like the Dark Mother, she nurtures both the cocoon time and the emergence.

Honor

Ideas to honor Imbolc:

- Bring in plenty of candles and forgo electricity as often as you are comfortable to celebrate our strengthening sun. If you've never tried your hand at candle making, now is a perfect time. It's as easy as purchasing some beeswax and cotton wicks.
- Create an altar to honor the season. Perhaps a dark cloth to represent the still dark and cold earth, while bringing in some fresh cut branches with wee buds appearing. Depending on the branch/twig, if you keep them in water they will continue to root and grow. Set up some of your candles and light your inspirations into birth.
- Begin your spring cleaning. Clear out the old to make way for what is to come.
- Set time for arts and creativity. Make everything you do beautiful. Write songs and poetry. Practice divination.
- Investigate the Goddess Brigid if she calls to you. Research the serpent, sacred to her. Visit a holy water if you have one nearby (all water is holy water). Weave a [Brigid's Cross](#) to hang on your door at Imbolc. The traditional way is with grasses or vines but can also be done with popsicle sticks and yarn.
- Spend time walking the Earth, noticing for changes of the coming season. If you have space for a bonfire, invite friends to offer their intentions and visions to the fire. If you've brought evergreens in for the Solstice, offer them back to the fire in ceremony. Dance and sing and make merry.

Reflection and Inquiry:

- What seeds are stirring in your belly? What is asking to be brought to birth?
- What could use the growing light of the sun? What needs illumination?
- What is inspiring you right now? Where could you nurture your creativity?
- What are the traditions of your family around this time of year? If you know the lineage of your blood, what did they celebrate and honor during this time? If you've created a wheel, what shows up for Winter/Spring? What colors, foods, activities, festivities, etc.?
- What are your own unique traditions and how can you actively embody the wisdom of this season?

