

Issue 2 Imbolc 2009

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Imbolc and Ostara

Imbolc literally means "in milk" or "in belly" and was the time of year when the ewes were lactating in preparation for the birth of new lambs. It is the time where the first stirrings of Spring begin to show. It is also a fertility festival honouring the Goddess Bride (Brighid). Traditions at this time involve the marriage of Bride to Her consort often symbolized as a corn dolly bedded with a priapus wand (acorn-tipped wand representing a phallus). This is a good time to make fertility or protection charms. Use white candles and flowers on your altar to honour the Maiden Bride.

It is also a time for new beginnings and purification, an excellent time to renew your spiritual path or re-dedicating yourself to Goddess. Consider making 'resolutions' to break old habits, or start new, healthy ones. Remember those resolutions you made January 1st? Now's your chance to make another fresh start (it is the Lunar New Year after all). Take the first step in making a dream come true!

As a fire festival it is a time to banish Winter and herald the coming Spring. You can cast off the cold dreary days by burning paper snowflakes in a ritual fire. You can expand on this by writing down on the snowflakes traits, habits, thoughts that seem to be holding you back. As the snowflakes burn to ash, know that you are clearing unnecessary baggage from your life. Bury the cool ashes in the earth away from your property.

Here is another ritual to banish a negative trait. Take a handful of snow or ice and place in a dish. Visualize your intent to banish negativity going into the ice. As the ice melts, feel the negativity drain away from you. Pour the water out onto the Earth away from your property.

There are many ways to honour the Goddess at Imbolc. Offer milk to the Deity and pour a libation upon the Earth, or leave a dish of milk outdoors for the Fey. As Brigid is the Goddess of Hearth and Home, this is a good time to get a head start on your Spring Cleaning. Clear out the clutter in your home, cleanse and purify every corner. Ask Brigid to protect your home and all who dwell within.

Ostara is the Vernal or Spring Equinox, named for the Saxon/Germanic Goddess Oestre/Ostara (literal translation: the "Month of Beginnings" or the "Month of Openings"). This is a time to celebrate the return of the Goddess Persephone from

the Underworld. The Dark Goddess is now reborn as the Flower Maiden. Symbols of Ostara include rabbits, seeds and eggs (all symbols of fertility). At this time we think of renewing ourselves. We renew our thoughts, our dreams, and our aspirations. We think of renewing our relationships. This is the time of year to begin anything new or to completely revitalize something. This is also an excellent month for prosperity rituals or rituals that have anything to do with growth.

Bless seeds and empower them with your intent for personal development and growth, or sow seeds of peace upon the Earth. Place these seeds in your garden or in a pot indoors, nurture with loving kindness. Colour and empower Ostara eggs (symbols of the Cosmic Egg of Creation) to place upon your altar. Empower the eggs with your intent (clarity, healing, personal growth...). As you eat the egg, imagine your intent entering and transforming you.

This is also a good time to replace your magickal broom. Name and consecrate the Broom as part of your Ostara ritual. Use the Broom to sweep clean a magick circle or to incorporate into rituals. This is also a good time to check over and replenish your magickal supplies.

Ajna DreamsAwake is an Initiate of [The Sacred Three Goddess school](#). She is an eclectic Pagan, rediscovering Her Visionary Goddess Gifts.

Brigid Invocation

There you are, Goddess,

With your streaming flame-red hair!

*I hear the hammer of your smithy,
And the eloquent words of your poetry
Satisfy something in my soul.
I hear the chants of women
The priestesses of your sacred flame,
See smoke that carries your prophecies.
Artists, poets and musicians honor you
With the beauty of their work.
Holy Mother Brigid, Bless us!
Honor us with your shining presence,
Wash us in the waters of your healing wells.
Brigantia the warrior, give us courage!
We dance to the movement of your flames.*

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Beth Clare Johnson

(Mystic Amazon)

Mystic Amazon has completed her Level IV training with Sisters in Celebration and is now a High Priestess. Her hobbies include writing, folk art, folk magick, Reiki, and reading.

Imbolc Invocation to Brigid

Brigid,
Oh exalted one,
We tend your flame today.
With your blessings
May this spark spread
Your light across the land
Once more, heralding the
Beginning of the end of winter.
How we miss your warmth
Beloved Lady!
We beseech you,
Oh fiery arrow,
Come amongst us once again.
Melt away the ice and snow,
And let the buds burst forth
To herald the presence
Of the beloved Lady of the Celts!
May your blessings be upon us
And upon the land,
On Imbolc and always!
Blessed Be.

©Jennifer Runham-Stark

February 2, 2008

Moonwater is an Initiate studying with the Sisters In Celebration. She is a writer and reiki master/teacher and has been a solitary Eclectic Wiccan practitioner for over ten years.

Prayer to Isis For a Vision in a Dream

As the stars rise in the sky tonight,

As I seek my bed to sleep,

Isis send to me a dream of meaning.

Send to me a vision, a lesson,

An experience to expand my soul,

Who I am, who I was of old.

Send me memories, Goddess Beyond Time,

Of lifetimes past, of those not yet gone by.

Show me what I should remember,

Imprint it on my heart and

Emblazon it on my soul.

Goddess Great, Mistress of Fate,

I humbly bring to You my request,

Asking that You teach me,

*The story of the Parts, and
The knowledge of the Whole.
Isis, Lady of the Words of Power,
As I sleep this night,
Please use these hours to instruct,
And guide.
Let me awake tomorrow, renewed
And refreshed—
And reassured I am on the path
To pass Life's test.*

© by Inara Aset Ahurani

Inara is a Level 1 student of Sisters in Celebration. She is a Reiki and Sehkhem practitioner.

The Sloth Woman's Cave

Items needed:

Candles

Soft music

A blanket or a quilt

Journal and pen

Purification tools

All of your goodies that make you feel loved, safe, and empowered. (This can be your crystals and stones, goddess statues, faerie trinkets, photos, etc.)

Ritual:

Light your candles and set your "goodies" around you. Purify your space however you wish. Turn on your music. Call your circle and invite those you wish to join you.

Sit and wrap your blanket or quilt around your shoulders and close your eyes. Breathe fully from your tummy and into your chest, envisioning healing energy moving through your cells. Exhale, releasing all of the stress, pain and concerns of the year. Repeat until you are relaxed.

Pick up your journal and pen, date the page, and make a list of the things that comfort you, give you peace, relax your mind, and bring joy to your heart. Reflect on the two or more wondrous moments this past year, and jot down how you felt during these experiences. Hold the journal to your chest, over your heart chakra, close your eyes, and thank Goddess for the blessings in your life. Close your book and put it aside. Be sure to keep this and look over it each time you feel stressed or overwhelmed.

Spend some quiet time enjoying each "goody" that surrounds you. Touch it, embrace it, eat it if it is food, smell it if it is incense or perfume or essential oils. Then thank each item for being part of your life.

When you are finished, open the circle and ground.

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Danu Gray-Wolf is High Priestess of [Order of the White Moon](#) through Sisters in Celebration. She works with Reiki, Animal Medicine, and emotional wellness, and shows love and honor to Goddess through art and healing.

Taking Chances

The Wheel is turning again, this time bringing us toward the Spring Equinox. But my garden seems to think that Spring is already here! My grape hyacinth bulbs began putting out leaves before Yule, and the pale yellow daffodils are already blooming. They were apparently very busy this Winter!

Winter has taken its toll, though. The freezes we've had off and on all through December have severely damaged my dwarf pomegranate bush. This was the one new plant I risked buying last year, as the garden was having money problems, and we didn't know if we'd even be able to keep it open. I put a HUGE healing/growing spell on her in the early Fall when I first planted her and the heat waves were threatening to take her away before she even had a chance to root properly. She survived, and new leaves were quickly replacing almost all those she had lost. She was even starting to fruit again, in December! Now I don't know if she will survive until February. Like someone watching a loved one battling a life-threatening illness, I hover over her nervously, looking for signs of either renewed life or impending death. Do I regret taking a chance on her? Absolutely not. Even though I will be devastated if I lose her, I'm not sorry I tried. Taking chances is one of the things in life that keeps us learning and growing and loving. Without risk, this life is

merely existence, something we do while waiting to move on to somewhere else.
How pointless is **THAT??**

"Goddess, help me to remember that life is like a turtle,
Who makes progress only when she sticks her neck out."

© BellaDonna Oya

BellaDonna Oya lives in Hayward, CA, where she runs a small eclectic coven. She is a Level II Initiate of [The Sacred Three Goddess School](#), and is currently working on Level III.

Niagara Falls

Queen of the Thundering Waters

Power exudes from You

and Flows into Me

I am Transformed by Your Presence

I shout with Joy

The Sound seems muted

Lost in Your Eternal Roar

Yet I know You Hear

My Exaltation, My Prayer

Nee-ah-gah-rah (Thundering Waters in the Iroquois Language) are the most sacred waters of the Iroquois people, and a focus of many of their legends and myths. For centuries, the Iroquois believed that the sound of the waterfall was the voice of Heno, the Mighty Spirit of the waters. The area is known as the Western Door, part of the transportation route that connected the East to as far West as the Mississippi. The Seneca, a tribe of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Nation), were the keepers of the Western Doorway.

Straddling the border between Ontario, Canada and New York State, Niagara Falls is composed of three separate waterfalls. Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side and Bridal Veil and American Falls on the American side. The waterfalls are separated by a series of small islands. Niagara Falls was formed when glaciers receded at the end of the last ice age, and water from the newly-formed Great Lakes carved a path through the Niagara Escarpment. One fifth of the World's freshwater passes through here before draining into Lake Ontario and out to the Atlantic Ocean.

Like a wild mustang, men have tried to tame and harness the raw energy of the Falls since 1759. They finally succeeded in 1881 and now Niagara Falls generates enough electricity to supply millions of homes and businesses with power. More than six million cubic feet of water falls over the crest every minute making this the most powerful waterfall in North America.

Goat Island is a popular destination for tourists visiting the falls on the U.S. side, offering some of the most spectacular views available there, in particular at Terrapin Point. It is connected to the U.S. mainland by two bridges. The island is largely wooded and is interlaced with foot trails. An elevator provides access down to the foot of the falls and to the *Cave of the Winds* tour. A series of platforms allow sightseers to walk right up to the base of the Bridal Veil Falls with water crashing down right on them and flowing beneath the decking.

Three Sisters Island is named for the daughters of an early settler to the area, General Whitney. It is accessible from Goat Island and offers a great view of the Upper Rapids before the river cascades over Horseshoe Falls. Those people who are sensitive to the subtle realms may be able to hear the voices of spirits while on the island.

Luna Island is also accessible from Goat Island via footbridge. It lies between the American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls. During the Full Moon, observers can see iridescent "moonbows" in the mists surrounding the Falls (hence the name Luna). Some believe Niagara Falls is a sacred site of Archangel Elen (Elimiel), who, in Jewish Kabbalah, is the Spirit Intelligence of the Moon. This would be an ideal site to call on Elen for angelic assistance in matters involving personal transformation.

The *Journey Behind the Falls*, on the Canadian side, consists of a series of tunnels below and behind Horseshoe Falls. Accessible by elevator, the tunnels allow visitors to view the water cascading in front of the open cave entrances.

The awesome power that has run the hydro-electric dams since 1881 may also be used to re-energize one's own batteries. The ionized air cleanses toxins by zapping the body with negative ions. There are many who believe negative ions also act as an aphrodisiac. No wonder they call it the Honeymoon Capital!! Here is a ritual one can do in either the *Cave of Winds* or the *Journey Behind the Falls* tours. Bring a piece of cotton or cheesecloth and a plastic baggie. When you reach the mists, gather the spray in your cloth. Then, as Captain Kirk used to say, "ENERGIZE"!!! Place the cloth in the plastic baggie and store in a safe place. When you feel the need for an energy boost, take out the cloth and inhale the power enmeshed within.

Downstream from the Falls one comes across the Whirlpool Rapids. A unique feature of the rapids is the "reversal phenomenon" that occurs when the waters rush into the gorge. Pressure builds as the water tries to cut across itself to reach the narrow gorge forcing the water under the incoming stream and a counter clockwise vortex is created. If there is something you wish to banish from your life, visualize it plunging into the watery abyss, spiraling away from you.

The Maid of the Mist: Fiction and Fact

There are several versions of the Maid of the Mist legend. In one myth, the maid is sacrificed annually to ensure abundant crops. When the chief's only daughter, Lelawala, is chosen to be sacrificed, he follows her over the falls in his grief. In another version, a young woman is forced to marry an older man against her will. Rather than marry, she commits suicide by going over the falls. In a third version, a young boy finds a two-headed serpent and brings it to the village. As it grows, it requires more and more food, and eventually, the villagers must sacrifice their own people to keep the snake fed. A maid is sacrificed to end the terror. There appears to be a version of the myth in many locales adjacent to waterfalls. In my home town of Iroquois Falls, the legend involved two warring tribes. One tribe slaughters the other, save one maiden. Rather than be taken by the enemy, she paddles over the falls, to join her tribe in death.

The Maid of the Mist legends continue to permeate Western culture. Most tourists are familiar with at least one of the many versions of the myth. Unfortunately, they are all utterly false, most likely a construct of the first European explorers passing through the area. The Iroquois Confederacy was matriarchal, women were respected and enjoyed complete autonomy and would never have been sacrificed for the good of the tribe. Nor was suicide a common practice among the Iroquois.

As well, mandatory offerings to a God to insure a good afterlife were not part of Iroquois storytelling. Even marriage was a European ritual not practiced by the Iroquois Nation. The mythical Maid certainly appeals to the romantic notion of the "Noble Savage" but it remains a damaging stereotype and is an insult not only to the Iroquois People but to First Nations everywhere who have been conquered by the White Man.

By 1996, Native Americans had enough of this "white man's fancy" passing for red man's fact. The Maid legend was viewed as offensive and racist propaganda. First Nations threatened to picket the Maid of the Mist boat tour at Niagara Falls until the tour dropped the controversial audio portion that related the legend. Reluctantly, the tour company did so, but one can still find souvenirs depicting the Maid legend at many local gift shops as well as on the internet.

The myth regarding the two-headed serpent may at least in part be rooted in some truth. The two heads of the snake can be likened to the two main countries interested in the new land, Britain and France. The Europeans seemed harmless at first, but as their numbers grew, they caused considerable harm to the First Nations of the Americas, bringing diseases and weapons to decimate their populations. As more people came across from Europe, so the snake grew. And the serpent is still growing, to the detriment of the original inhabitants, forcing First Nations peoples onto reservations, coercing them to attend residential schools, destroying their culture, co-opting their spirituality.

Despite the controversy, there is no denying the awesome power that exudes from this place. James Dixon, writing in 1845 compared the waters of Niagara to the robes of a goddess. But She is much more than this. Niagara is the watery embodiment of the Great Goddess Herself, in all Her aspects. She is the playful

Maiden seen in the dancing droplets, the nurturing Mother who provides needed water to inhabitants of the area and to the farms that feed millions. She is Death to those unfortunates who dare to dance with Her, and She is also Crone, a witness to one's Spiritual Development. There is no doubt; She changes all who come into Her presence.

It is nearly impossible to get much privacy for rituals in the immediate area surrounding the Falls, so you will need to find creative ways to achieve inner solitude. Save the feasting for one of the many fine restaurants in the area, or, for a more intimate repast, pick up fresh produce and/or wine from some of the many orchards and vineyards in the area (Please check state and provincial laws regarding alcohol and transport of products across borders).

Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory is located upriver, on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens & School of Horticulture. The Conservatory is a wonderful place for peaceful contemplation. Find a quiet bench to commune with the butterflies, note what stage you are in your own life. Are you preparing for retreat? Cocooning? Ready to emerge? Already in flight? Ask the butterflies how they can help bring a metamorphosis into your own life.

You can devise many simple rituals that can be done surreptitiously near the waters. If you have a message to tell someone far away, tell it to Niagara and She will carry your message to the person. If you have a question, whisper it to the waters and listen for the response. If you are upriver of the Falls, find a bench and attempt to center yourself, allow the voices of tourists to flow around you. Think on what you would like to change in your life. A wish for abundance? clarity of thought? healing for self or others? When you are clear on what your intentions are, find a leaf or stick, or use a small piece of fruit or bread crumb and place your

intention into the offering. When ready, cast the offering into the river, knowing that your prayer will flow downstream to the Falls and be taken up by the spirits there.

Niagara Falls is more than a popular tourist attraction. The area offers many opportunities to commune with the raw, awesome power of Nature. It truly is one of the most powerful places of the Goddess in North America.

<http://www.webwinds.com/yupanqui/iroquoisdreams3.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niagara_Falls

<http://www.niagara-usa.com/about/history08.html>

Patricia Telesco: *Magickal Places: A Wiccan Guide to Sacred Sites and Spiritual Centers*

James Dixon: *Personal Narrative of a Tour Through a Part of the United States and*

Canada: With Notices of the History and Institutions of Methodism in America

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Ajna DreamsAwake is an Initiate of [The Sacred Three Goddess school](#). She is an eclectic Pagan, rediscovering Her Visionary Goddess Gifts.

OWM Happenings

Initiations and Ordinations

It is with great honor and joy that we announce that Mystic Amazon and Danu Gray Wolf from Sisters in Celebration have completed Level IV and were approved by the Ordaining Council to become Ordained Ministers and High Priestesses of the [Order of the White Moon](#)!

Our newest Lifetime Member of the [Order of the White Moon](#) is Maeve Moonbird. We welcome her with great sister-love!

Andromeda, from the [Sacred Three](#) branch school, completed Level II to become an Adept in the White Moon Tradition!

Yule & SisterLove

Our annual Secret Sister Yule Exchange took place in December. Several sisters participated. Our coordinator, HP Etain roused our spirits high with a theme! The theme was Change: change today for a better tomorrow....

"Today through our sisterhood we are making the changes in our lives that will create a better tomorrow for all of us. Let's take this opportunity to make room in our lives by passing along those things that we have loved and enjoyed but no longer have need of. Our Yule exchange is the perfect time for 'gifting away' of such items. We all have them, that surplus of things magickal, beautiful, or useful that have served us well and now could be very happy in a sister's home. With this in heart, mind and spirit... please consider participating this year in our gift exchange and share in the joy of giving and receiving."

~ excerpted from Etain's invitation

Nessa CrescentMoon is a High Priestess, an Ordained Minister, Treasurer of the OWM, a founder of Sisters in Celebration.

Ostara

Spring is emerging

As I sit here on my back porch

Sipping my favorite coffee

The bare trees

Timid at first...tiny leaves

With each days warmth

The Sun coaxing them out

Buttercups are blooming

Scattered across the yard

Grass turning green yet again

Tempting me to walk barefoot

Across That lovely carpet

Ostara is here

Colored eggs

Time for rejoicing in the rebirth

I do so love the cycle of Spring

Imbolc Poem

Blessed be for Winter's respite

Time for re-energizing and festivals

During long days and nights.

Taking walks in the snowy woods

Story-telling and poets to amuse.

Enjoying feasts from Summer's work.

Blessed Be for Winter's Cycle.

Imbolc is nigh upon us,

Search for Her Cycle in daily journeys,

Little Shoots from the Earth emerge.

Soon there will be buds

Adorning the trees.

Blessed Be for Brigid

For Blessing me.

Brightest Blessings,

Lady Zephyr

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Lady Zephyr is a Level II Initiate with Sisters in Celebration. She is also a member of the Tupelo Area Pagan's Group.

Walking in Springtime

*Watch as the Goddess spreads her
Colourful cloak across your path,
For as she does the first flowers
Will burst forth from waking soil.*

*The fresh warm breezes you
Fell brush past your cheeks
Are her breath as she continues
On her walk throughout her domain.*

*The creatures of the forest and
The meadow soon shake off their
Winter slumber, coming out of
Their homes to greet the Lady
As she glides amongst them.
With her magick cast, everything is
Renewed and reborn, fresh and alive,
And so the dance of life goes on.*

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Moonwater is an Initiate studying with the Sisters In Celebration. She is a writer and reiki master/teacher and has been a solitary Eclectic Wiccan practitioner for over ten years.

Book Review

The Moon Under Her Feet; The Story of Mary Magdalene in the Service of the Great Mother

Author : Clysta Kinstler

This book is hands down my favorite piece of Goddess oriented fiction. It is a beautiful retelling of the story of Mari/Mary Magdalene's and Yeshua/Jesus' life from within the Goddess culture. It provides a different angle to the conqueror written history books. Though this is a work of fiction, the author provides references to much of her research and the 'what ifs' as well as the possibilities presented are astounding.

A great read for anyone, but especially for those in Goddess spirituality who had a painful transition from one of the Christian faiths. "The Moon Under Her Feet" is very thought provoking providing healing to the rift so many of us were left with from our old faiths.

Even from just a fiction review angle, I highly recommend "The Moon Under Her Feet." Kinstler has a wonderful writing style that pulls the reader in and deep

characters that enrich the tale. Whether you are looking for a good read, a thought provoking concept or to heal old wounds, check out "The Moon Under Her Feet"!

Aisling is a Level I student with Sisters in Celebration. A druid and perpetual student of herbalism, Aisling is also deepening her work with Shamanism.

Imbolc Ritual Cake

Ingredients:

1 & 3/4 cups self-rising flour

2 eggs -beaten

3/4 cup water

3/4 cup sugar

1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 tbs. poppyseeds

1 tbs. grated lemon peel

2 tbs. lemon juice

powdered sugar

This is all done in one pan. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour, sugar and poppyseeds with a fork in an ungreased 9"x9"x2" baking pan. Stir in the remaining ingredients, except the powdered sugar. Bake 35-40 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, and the top is golden brown. Remove from oven and cool. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes 8 servings.

Imbolc Apple Dumplings

Ingredients:

1 quart dried apples

3 pounds smoked ham

2 tablespoons brown sugar

a pinch of cinnamon

a few cloves

2 cups self-rising flour

pepper

1 egg-well beaten

3 tablespoons melted butter

1/2 cup milk

Cover dried apples with water and soak overnight. In the morning cover the ham with water and simmer for 2 hours, add the apples and water and simmer for about 1 more hour. Add brown sugar, cinnamon and cloves.

For the dumplings, mix flour and pepper together, stir in the egg, butter and milk until lightly blended. Drop by tablespoon into the simmering ham and apples. Cover and cook over medium heat for 20 minutes.

Lady Zephyr is a Level II Initiate with Sisters in Celebration. She is also a member of the Tupelo Area Pagan's Group.

Brigid Bouquet Sachets

This is a fun and simple project for the entire family.

Materials:

Imbolc Potpourri (recipe below)

1 yard White Material (silk, netting, organza, sheers...)

Yellow and Pink 1/8" width Ribbon

Scissors

Elastics or twist ties (optional)

Potpourri:

1/2 cup dried basil

1/2 cup dried chopped bay leaves,

1 cup dried Heather flowers

1 cup dried Violets

1 cup dried white or pink rosebuds

Blend dried flowers and herbs together in non-metal bowl. Cut fabric into 4"x4" squares and lay out on a flat surface. Place 1 heaping tablespoon of potpourri in the middle of each square. Gather the excess material until potpourri is caught in a "bag".

Twist the top and tie off with yellow or pink ribbon (To keep contents secure, use elastic or twist tie). Use enough ribbon to make a small bow in the front of the sachet. You can tie a blessing or intention into the bow. Sachets like these were often exchanged as symbols of good luck and fertility.

Imbolc Pouch

Make a pouch using a piece of material and placing dried leaves, pine cone pieces and fruit peelings. Tie with a lavender ribbon and place on your doorstep honoring Brigid.

Lady Zephyr is a Level II Initiate with Sisters in Celebration. She is also a member of the Tupelo Area Pagan's Group.