**Brighid**

February 1st is the Feast of Brighid in the Henge’s liturgical calendar, though her celebrations occur across a range of days from January 31st through February 6th. Brighid is many things to many people, a goddess whose worship is so central to Ireland that themes of her few pre-Christian stories and traditional customs may seen in the miracles and workings, the sacred wells and sacred flames, of the Saints who bear her many names. Saints and goddesses who may or may not be our Brighid are known and beloved in Scotland, Wales, and the Isle of Man as well.

Brighid is a triple goddess, three sisters who are one, who are the Smith, the Poet, and the Healer. She rules over the fires of Forge, of Hearth, and of Inspiration and creativity, and of the healing waters of her wells. She is a liminal goddess, and as the poets of old were also oracles and divines, she rules over divination and prophecy. Her healing is not only of the body but of the mind, and she knows grief, having been the first to keen at the death of her son Ruadan by Bres, half-Danann and half-Fomorian, who was killed in the war between his two peoples. She invented as well the calling in the night that was used to communicate before battle, so she is also one who does not shrink back from what causes call for fighting even as she mourns that losses that come from it.

Another mention of three Brigit’s had them not as sisters but as three women of three generations of a family: Brigit of Hospitality, Brigit of Justice, and Brigit of the Cowless. Thus is she connected again to hearth, especially to its generosity of nourishment and community, to poetry as the poets of the distant past were judges as well, and to fighting for what is right in standing for the dispossessed and friendless. Brighid was also associated with arts and crafts; she was clever of fingers and facile of tongue. She had two great oxen, Fe and Men, the king of boars was hers as well, Torc Triath, and the king of sheep, Cirb. Her animals would cry out in warning when needed, and she is thus also considered by many a guardian of livestock.

The lore and love and light of Brighid is complex in a way that invites us to honor our own complexity and to embody that complexity with integrity and compassion as we move in the worlds.

**The Cauldrons of Posey**

There is an Irish composition found in a legal codex from the 16th century called the Cauldron of Posey which speaks of three cauldrons to our persons, our bodies: the Cauldron of Warming in the pelvic bowl, which is born into us facing up and open; the Cauldron of Motion in our chests, in our hearts, which is born into us tilted on its side; and the Cauldron of Knowledge or Wisdom, in the head, which is born into us inverted. It through a process of experiencing the sorrows and joys of life that inspiration “the knowledge which illumines” or *imbas forosnai* is received and flows through us, turning our cauldrons upright. We will work with these three Cauldrons in our ritual below. (for a more academic treatment of the subject see: <https://www.seanet.com/~inisglas/henrycauldronpoesy.pdf>)

**The Ritual**

Prepare yourself and your space in your usual way for ritual. Set up a candle or other flame and a place to make offering. You should come prepared with your offering for Brighid (she is quite partial to blackberry brandy, mead, whiskey, dairy, and baked goods- but who isn’t?) and a cup of something to drink which symbolizes wisdom for you- whiskey perhaps or milk or mead or cool, clear water. You will need three good mouthfuls.

Purify yourself in the way most meaningful to you, cleansing your head and heart and hands in preparation for the moments ahead, then light your candle and speak a prayer a welcome such as the one below:

*I light this flame as my ancestors lit it,*

*flame of my hearth, flame of my heart.*

*I light this flame as my ancestors lit it*

*and Brighid, I invite you in.*

*Brighid, you are within.*

Breathe deeply and when you are ready speak the invocation to Brighid:

*Brighid, Exalted Lady of the Sacred Wells, I call you.*

*I feel you pass and in your footsteps arise the first flowers of spring,*

*the snowdrops which both heal and harm,*

*the nourishing greens and rushing waters feeding life,*

*the quenching that cools fever and tempers what you transform.*

*Brighid, Bright Lady of the Sacred Flames, I call you.*

*I feel your warmth in the hearth at the center of my home,*

*in the heat of the forge where I am shaped,*

*in the flames of wisdom which fuel us,*

*in the conflagration which limns tongue and hands as I create.*

*Brighid, Gracious Lady of grief and joy, of keening and song,*

*be welcome here.*

*Join me at my good fire.*

*Brighid, I call you.*

Breathe deeply, filling your belly then allowing your chest to expand outward and upward until your lungs are filled. Pause gently for a moment at the top of your breath and then exhale slow and smooth.

Feel down into the Earth, letting your roots delve deeply to touch the deep water there. Following the rhythm of your breath, begin to draw those waters up into the bowl of your pelvis and the Cauldron of Warming there. Feel those cooling waters pooling there, and as the Cauldron fills, allow the underworld waters, those healing, lifegiving waters, to follow your breath up.

Allow those waters to move into the Cauldron of Motion in your heart-center, tipping it upright. Continue to breathe deeply and naturally, drawing those waters up until this Cauldron, too, is filled. Again, allow the waters to follow your breath up to the Cauldron of Knowledge in the bowl of your skull.

Allow the waters to brush against the inside of that inverted Cauldron, and begin to turn it upright. Following your breath and its own natural path through you, draw the waters up into the Cauldron and then finally out the top of your head to run in a healing, cleansing flow down your body.

Open yourself now to the celestial fires above, and breathe in again deeply, drawing those fires down into your head, igniting a fire beneath the Cauldron there. Continue to breathe in and out, slow and steady, feeling those fires burning hotter, surer with each exhalation.

And when those flames are lit, notice the sparks drifting from them and follow your breath down as it draws those sparks to the hearth beneath your Cauldron of Motion. As you exhale, see that breath, slowly and steadily feeding the sparks until that kindling catches. Feed the flames beneath your Cauldron until they burn merrily.

Notice again the sparks popping from the sap in the wood and draw them down with your breath to the wood beneath your Cauldron of Warming. Breathe these flames, too, into being, so that they blaze merrily in the bowl of your pelvis. Feel the fires and the waters within you. Sense the steam rising from the waters within, filling you with well-being, with inspiration, with knowing.

Listen to the waters bubbling, smell the steam and good, clean woodsmoke, and listen as Brighid flames and flows in you. What wisdom does she bring? What knowing does she share?

What transformation does she ask of you in the forge of yourself and the crucibles of this life?

*Listen. Respond as you feel moved.*

What healing and nourishment does she offer? For the forge is always balanced by the well.

*Listen. Respond as you feel moved.*

What work or play are you to turn your hands to in this coming year? What inspiration arises?

*Listen. Respond as you feel moved.*

And when you are ready, pick up your cup. Speak the words that come to you, that embody what you have learned, what you have been given. Drink deeply of what Brighid has offered you. Then take up your offering, and pour it out, speaking the words of thanks or honor that rise in your heart.

As you snuff the flame of your candle, you may say:

*I smoor this flame as my ancestors smoored it,*

*Flame of my hearth, flame of my heart.*

*I smoor this flame as my ancestors smoored it,*

*As ritual I end. Brighid, you still burn within.*

Close out your ritual in your usual way. Take note of anything of import from your experience.