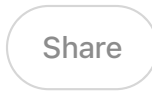



A Brigid Hearth Spell

News from my writing desk and drawing table

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FEB 2, 2024





We have arrived at one of my favorite times of the turning year: Brigidtide, also known as Imbolc among those who honor the old ways. It has come down to us here in the States as Groundhog Day, a true weather auguring holiday, but is also part of the Christian church calendar as Candlemas or Candelaria. I love it because of the presence of my alchemical yet steady, **deeply protective** goddess, Brigid. She is called St. Brigid in Ireland, where just last year they elevated her status with a national bank holiday, but her roots are much older than the church. She is part of the land there, and beloved by all. I, like many, celebrate Brigid as a “tide” over three days at least, and sometimes longer, depending on when the astrologers calculate “astrological Imbolc,” the true midpoint between Yule and Vernal Equinox (as befits a cross-quarter day), which this year falls on February 4.

Initiating my presence here on Substack at this time of the year is fitting, for it is often seen as a time of dedication. I place my quill and ink pot on my hearth altar, hang the Brigid’s cross **made** from wheat stalks some years ago, bring water in a vase for the flowering quince which in California signals this earliest springtime, and light a consecrated candle, for Brigid is a fire goddess. These symbols enlarge, at her festival time, my daily devotion to Brigid.

Every morning, I light my hearth candle with these words.

*The light of Brigid shine about me
on my going out and coming in
from dawn to dusk
and all the dark hours*

I pray with my arms and my breath, lifting, encircling, opening, up, down, around. At the end, I cover my eyes, as I learned from my Jewish friend as she lights the shabbat candles at dusk. When I have time or need, I say the whole invocation, inviting the

aid of the four directions, the four elements, and spirit within and all round. There is a version of it [here](#), and I have made a spoken record of it for you below. I often forget parts, or say them out of order. Sometimes I cry or laugh, venture a petition, or am interrupted by my other householders. As the poet said, forget your perfect offering. Just showing up is the thing.



Then I sit with an open notebook on my lap and focus on my words for a while. But soon the cats are at me, or the body with its cravings for tea and oatmeal. My children are grown, but life is life and needs must be met.

This is how I bring focus to my day, for the word focus comes from the Latin for hearth fire. Touching in with this spell every day at my hearth grounds me in my place and centers me in my mind and heart. The overwhelm of modern life is ongoing, the news terrible, the flood of information and images unrelenting. Even the wealth of words here on Substack is a cacophony some days, and yet here I am adding mine. Deep breaths are medicine.

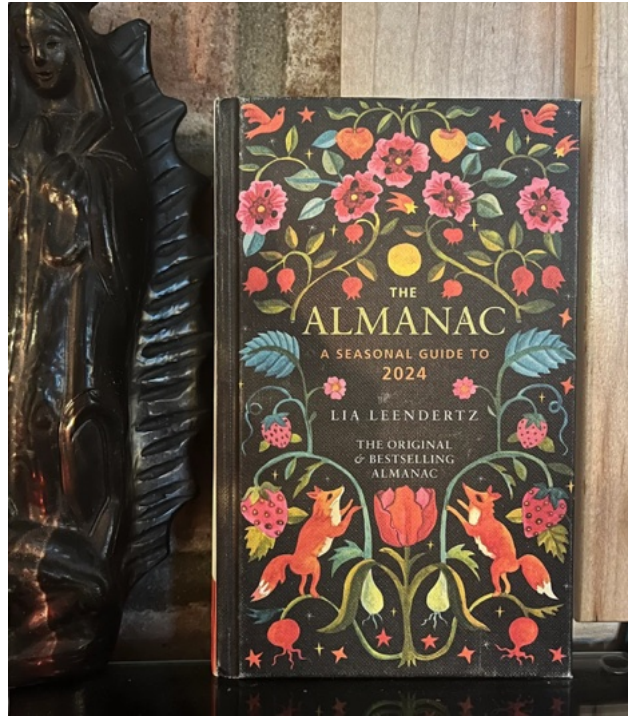


Resources for you to dance with:

I have been writing [for years](#) about Brigid and the multifaceted ways I adore this goddess of poetry, smithing, healing, fire and spring.

I love [Lia's Living Almanac](#) and this year sprang for one of her gorgeous little books,

in honor of my trip to England last year. But she has a very vibrant Substack here as well.



The National Museum of Ireland has a [charming page](#) with a video about all the forms Brigid's wheels can take.

[Herstory](#) in Ireland makes my heart so happy. Instrumental in achieving the official recognition of St. Brigid, these women know full well that the saint is the goddess is the woman.

The Brigid image on the card in the altar photo at the top is the exquisite work of [Jo Jayson](#).

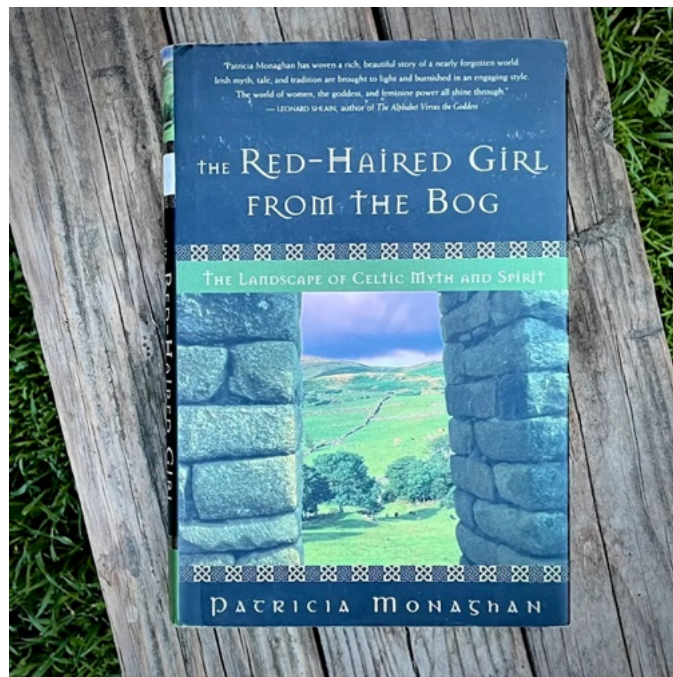
Joanna Powell Colbert is offering her online course [Nine Days of Brigid](#) on her Substack, Messages from Sea and Cedar. Her teachings are altogether inspiring and informative, and the community she creates is fun and lasting.

Lastly, you might enjoy one of the first books I read nearly twenty years ago about

Brigid and the old ways in Ireland, *The Red-Haired Girl from the Bog*. One of the most respected authors about women's spirituality, Patricia Monaghan, gives us equal parts memoir, travelogue, and primer to the divine feminine, as she puts it succinctly in her first chapter:

... what monotheism leaves out is the goddess. There has never been a religion that had a goddess but no god, in the way that monotheisms have gods but no goddesses.

With generous doses of myth and etymology, this fine meander through the old country has been a true pleasure for me to revisit as the hills around me are greening in this rainy California winter-turning-spring.



News

I've moved my newsletter over to Substack. If you have been a subscriber to my past

newsletters, you needn't do a thing. As always, when you subscribe to Prose and Letters, you will receive notifications when I post a new journal entry, offer a sale on my artwork, have an upcoming exhibit, or otherwise show or publish my work. If you'd like to see some examples of past newsletters, I have some [archived](#) here.

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