

Welcome to Imbolc and the Season of Increasing Light

Today we celebrate Imbolc. Some call this day Candlemas. We know this day as Bridget's day. We honor her today and the women that tend her eternal fires. It is a time when mothers feel life moving inside. It is the time for seeds to be bursting from their shells or pods and begin sending out a shoot that will break through the cold earth to become a seedling. In some Christian services the priest or minister bless throats.

The wheel has turned again and we find outsides looking for longer days and warmer times. The weather has turned snowy and sometimes it feels as if spring is a long time away. The days are so short and the cold weather seeps into your bones. Then you notice a tiny white or yellow or even purple head peeking up through the snow and you know spring is just around the corner. Everyone is looking for a place to get warm. This little one paid us a visit the other day in our bathtub. We still are not sure how he got there but he was very thirsty.



Since Groundhog Day is also celebrated I included an old English song which explains about his shadow.

*If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Come, Winter, have another flight;
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Go Winter, and come not again.*

The maple trees in my yard have buds on them along with the hummingbird bushes. This is the quickening moon and in the Celtic calendar, Imbolc occurs during the Luis Ogham. The poet Amergin wrote "I am a lake upon a plain" for this time of year which gives references to the melting snows and the flooding after.

Today I noticed the first blueberries of the season. I wonder who will get to enjoy them me or the rabbits. Last year was our first year for berries. May the plants be blessed with health and long life.



I hope the groundhog doesn't see his shadow or the frost will damage the buds. Since this is the beginning of a new year I restored my tradition of placing blue candles in the window. For me the blue signifies healing so the light of the candle will extend healing all around the house.



May you all be blessed and stay warm.

Dawn

Photos by Dawn Thomas

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Ask Your Mama by Mama Donna Henes

Are you cyclically confused? In a ceremonial quandary? Completely clueless? Wonder no more.

***Ask Your Mama™**

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Spirituality and Didn't Know Who to Ask™

by

©Mama Donna Henes, Urban Shaman

A Question of Blue Balls

Dear Mama Donna,

I purchased some small bright blue chalky balls from your online Spirit Shop. I am fascinated by them and find them to be beautiful. Could you tell me what they are? And what they are for? Thanks.

- Loving the blue balls in Brooklyn,

Dear Blue,

The blue balls are simply bluing. Bluing is a purifying agent. It's what our mothers and grandmothers bought in bottles or little wrapped cubes to add to their wash. It makes the whites white and the brights bright. The same as those little blue flecks in modern powdered laundry detergents.

These nickel and dime size blue balls are used widely in the Caribbean and Latin America. Puerto Rican women put these blue balls into bowls of water which they place under the heads of their beds to promote clear dreams and visions.

Whereas Native American dream catchers are hung above the bed to filter out negativity from the dreams, the bluing under the bed act as a preventative against having bad dreams and nightmares in the first place. The antiseptic quality of the bluing cleans one's subconscious thought patterns.

Bluing is used in protection rituals in many areas of the world. There is a very fine line between purification and protection, after all. If the atmosphere and energy is clean then there is be no place for negative spirit to hide.

There is a town in the Rif Mountains of northern Morocco where the doorways and windows, every opening and passage of every single building are outlined with thick borders painted with this same blue mineral as a spell against evil spirits entering through any aperture.

It's like saying, "This is my house. Negative energy is not welcome here." The famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo painted her entire house, which she named Casa Azul (Blue House), with the same bluing agent to ward off harm.

I have painted the threshold of my door with a paint created from watered down blue balls. I drew the line, as it were, creating a boundary past which unwanted energy cannot pass. It serves as an unwelcome mat!

So put your blue balls to work for you. Place them in a bowl of water and put it by a window. Or dip them in water and draw magical signs with them. Take a spiritual cleansing bath with them. Or if you have grey hair use them as a rinse. They will absorb and lighten any negativity in the atmosphere of your environment and yourself, as well.

With blessings of blue protection,

xxMama Donna

*Are you cyclically confused? In a ceremonial quandary? Completely clueless? Wonder no more.

*Send your questions about seasons, cycles, celebrations, ceremonies and spirit to Mama Donna at:

CityShaman@aol.com

Donna Henes is an internationally renowned urban shaman, ritual expert, award-winning author, popular speaker and workshop leader whose joyful celebrations of celestial events have introduced ancient traditional rituals and contemporary ceremonies to millions of people in more than 100 cities since 1972. She has published four books, a CD, an acclaimed Ezine and writes for The Huffington Post, Beliefnet and UPI Religion and Spirituality Forum. Mama Donna, as she is affectionately called, maintains a ceremonial center, spirit shop, ritual practice and consultancy in Exotic Brooklyn, NY where she offers intuitive tarot readings and spiritual counseling and works with individuals, groups, institutions, municipalities and corporations to create meaningful ceremonies for every imaginable occasion.

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

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<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-henes/>

Read her on Beliefnet:

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/thequeenofmyself/>

Book Review Fat Witch Bake Sale by Patricia Holding with Lucy Baker

Review by Dawn Thomas

Publisher: Rodale Books

202 Pages



I have followed the Fat Witch Bakery blog for a while and was excited to read this book. Just looking at the cover made me want eat everything on it! The Fat Witch Bakery is in Manhattan. The bakery uses the author's own recipes based on her brownies. I was surprised to learn she did not intend on being a baker; she began her career as a trader on Wall Street. This book theme is bake sales and she offers suggestions on colors, to-do lists and so much more.

There are 65 recipes in the book divided into different categories. There is a chapter dedicated to baking for kids. Other chapters include halfway healthy (that made me laugh just reading the title), gluten-free and vegan recipes. In addition to the recipes, the author shares her knowledge of running a baking business. She also gives

recommendations on packaging baked goods for a bake sale.

The author begins the book with the basic baking ingredients and tools. The chapter on chocolate is mouthwatering to say the least. I couldn't decide which recipe I liked the best. The ingredients are readily available and the instructions are very easy to follow. She also provides storage tips for each recipe and display suggestions. The baking with kids chapter has many of my childhood favorites plus some new to me. With strawberries coming into season here in Florida I am looking forward to making the cookie crumble recipe.

The halfway healthy chapter includes recipes with fruit and nuts. I think my favorite in this chapter is the snappy ginger cookies although the sweet potato brownies certainly have my attention. She also uses sugar substitutions in this chapter as a healthy alternative. The recipes in the gluten-free chapter sound amazing. I wish I had some of these when I was eating gluten-free instead of the recipes I used especially the meringue cookies. I think I will make the nutty half-moon cookies for my next full moon gathering. In the vegan chapter she shares her substitutes for butter and eggs. I was pleasantly surprised on the vegan recipes and am having a hard time deciding which recipe to make first the apple loaf or the orange pine nut cookies.

The unexpected recipes chapter really was unexpected. The sweet-and-salty caramel blondies looks delicious. Who doesn't love salty and sweet? One of my granddaughters would love to try the bacon brownies. The next chapter is dedicated to international themed treats. The Indian spice cookies sound like the perfect dessert for a soup I recently made with similar spices. The Chinese almond cookie is certainly going to make an appearance at my home in the near future.

The tipsy treats chapter is for adults because of the alcohol in the recipes. She uses a variety from rums to beers to whiskies and liqueurs. The last chapter includes a variety of icing recipes from the well-known chocolate to cinnamon or maple. She also includes tips for using the icings on different recipes in

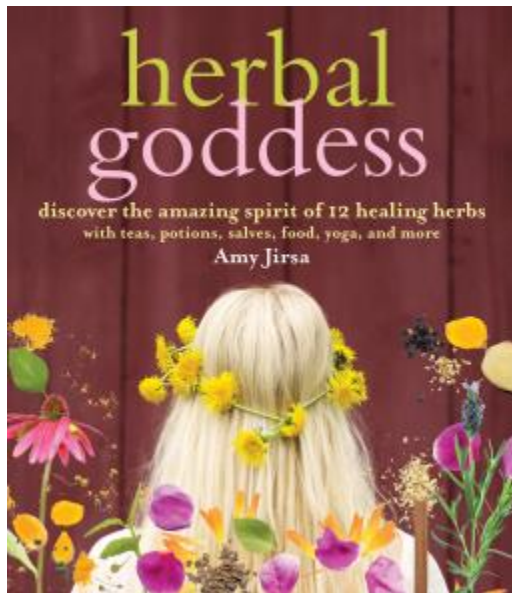
the book. I highly recommend this book to anyone that loves baking. I don't think you will be disappointed.

Book Review Herbal Goddess by Amy Jirsa

Review by Dawn Thomas

Publisher: Storey Publishing

256 Pages



In the introduction the author makes a statement many people do not understand. She says we rely on nature for food, water sun and raw materials for clothing and shelter but we do not consider it for our health needs. So many times when we don't feel well the doctor will prescribe a pill. Many doctors do not believe in natural remedies or alternative medicine. I was happy to review this book because I think we need to return to the basics. We know what is best for our bodies and should listen to what the body is telling us. She goes into detail on 12 herbs. Most if not all of the herbs listed in the book are readily available.

The author suggests focusing on one herb at a time so the reader can get to know it. I really enjoy her writing style. The book is easy to read and understand. She does not assume the reader has knowledge on herbal preparations so she provides basic definitions. Each chapter includes

information for the body, mind and spirit and a little magic. Each chapter ends with recipes and yoga positions. I really like the photos included in the book. The layout almost feels like we are looking at someone's scrapbook with stories and recipes.

In the chapter on chamomile she states we should do one thing for ourselves each day. This fits with the beginning of a New Year and mindful living. One thing I learned is chamomile is in the ragweed family. I am following her suggestion to use chamomile to counteract overindulgence. After reading the chapter I agree chamomile is a super herb.

In the chapter on rose she suggests planting roses but does not recommend hybrids which have been lost medicinal properties. She includes uses for rose I had not considered before. I cannot wait to try a few of the recipes. She suggests using rose to deepen the connection to the divine. It must be fate I am reviewing the book right now. I have felt disconnected with my spirituality but thanks to this book I found another way to strengthen that connection.

In the chapter on dandelion she asks the question many of us have asked, "When did dandelion become a weed?" In the chapter on holy basil, she suggests it has more developed medicinal qualities than other varieties of the herb. She mentions the healing quality for stings that would have come in handy when I was stung by the wasp last year. She considers holy basil an influential herb to her for many reasons. In the chapter on Nettles I learned plantain (not the banana type fruit) help heal the stinging from nettles. I also did not know nettles have an antihistamine that helps relieve itching caused by allergies. In the

chapter for calendula she recommends this herb for anyone working with the spoken word for people especially people engaged in arguing or debating.

In the chapter on lavender the author gives an example of a chef that burned himself and put his hand in lavender oil. I was unaware of its analgesic, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties. In the past I only used it for relaxation. Now I have learned many more uses for this wonderful herb. I really like the way she describes the plant and its grounding properties. She compares it to how we live.

In the chapter on turmeric, the author describes the antioxidant properties of the herb. She writes turmeric can basically work on any type of inflammation. In the chapter on Echinacea, she describes using the herb in a paste for scrapes and cuts. In the chapter for elder there is an amazing syrup recipe I am anxious to try. In the chapter on cinnamon I love how she describes the nostalgic feeling she gets from smelling cinnamon. I learned cinnamon is good to tone skin. In the chapter on ginger she shares how to dig up a portion of the root without affecting the entire plant.

I learned so much from this book about herbs. The author goes into some details that may not be well known. I certainly learned a lot reading her book. Now I am going to revamp my herb garden and make sure I include as many of these 12 herbs as I can grow.

Book Review *Since You Were Gone* by Mary Jennifer Payne

Review by Dawn Thomas

Publisher: Dundurn

224 Pages

Young Adult



The book opens with Edie coming home from school. She is afraid her mother, Sydney, will be mad since she was involved in another fight at school. Constantly moving makes it hard to make friends and she seems to make more enemies. She and her mother live in Toronto and are hiding from her abusive father. He is with the police department and has been chasing them for years. Her mother tells her this move to London will be their last move.

Upon arriving in London, Sydney finds a job with a cleaning company working nights but doesn't return home. Edie is frantic but tries not to show it. She cannot tell the teachers or any adult her mother is missing. She enlists the help of an unlikely ally and together they search London.

Although we do not hear from her very much, Sydney's love for Edie is strong. She is willing to pick up and leave at a moment's notice and accept menial jobs just so Edie can have a safe life. This book sheds light on domestic abuse and the effect it has on family members. Sometimes the best thing to do is run as fast and as far as you can. But if you are running from the police, they can find you anywhere you go.

Book Review: The Witch of Painted Sorrows by M.J. Rose

Review by Dawn Thomas

Publisher: Atria Books

384 Pages

Literature/Fiction (Adult)



The book is set in 1890s Paris, France. Sandrine Salome is a young woman married to a financier in New York. When her father commits suicide Sandrine knows her husband was behind it. She leaves New York and seeks refuge with her grandmother in Paris. When she arrives in Paris at the grand house she finds it closed up and a man, Julien, answers the door. He tells her the house is undergoing renovations and her grandmother is living in a nearby hotel. Sandrine surprises her grandmother with her arrival. Her grandmother is adamant that Sandrine not return to the house.

But Sandrine does return to the house and begins a relationship with Julien. She also enrolls in a prestigious art school under the guise of a young man. Once accepted she reveals her true self to the board. Her painting continues to improve even though she never trained as an artist and finds herself driven by an unknown force. At times she questions what is happening to her.

Every day Sandrine goes to the house the more she feels the presence of someone, a woman. This is La Lune. She is an ancestor and the original owner of the house. Sandrine falls under the influence of La Lune and her personality seems to take on different traits. She becomes jealous and angry with people trying to keep her from La Lune and Julien. In a dark moment she seeks the help of an occultist who says he can help her. After a botched exorcism and the rabbi dies, her grandmother fears for Sandrine's sanity. Only Sandrine has the power to break the spell of La Lune.

M.J. Rose is an author that grabs a reader's attention until the last page. In fact, I had to go back and re-read the last page to make sure I understood the ending.

Brigid's Fire by Shauna Aura Knight

I am the fire

I am the Fire in the head

I am the fire of Inspiration

I am the lightning strike

I am the breath of life

I am the spark of Love

When have you lit the way?

I am the fire
I am the fire in the hearth
I am the fire of Healing

*I am the midwife's mantle
I am the working hands
I am the love that holds you up*

What is the fire that burns within?

I am the fire
I am the fire in the heart
I am the fire of transformation

*I am the storm inside
I am the anvil strike
I am the breaking heart*

What is your place of secret flame?

I am the water
I am the sacred waters of the well
I am the depth of dream

*I am a the rains that fall to earth
I am the tears that fill the seas
I am a constellation reflected in water*

When has your heart been broken?

* First published in Eternal Haunted Summer

Shauna Aura Knight

An artist, author, ritualist, presenter, and spiritual seeker, Shauna travels nationally offering intensive education in the transformative arts of ritual, community leadership, and personal growth. She is the author of ***The Leader Within, Ritual Facilitation, and Dreamwork for the Initiate's Path***. She's a columnist on ritual techniques for CIRCLE Magazine, and her writing also appears in the anthologies ***Stepping in to Ourselves: An Anthology of Writings on Priestessing, A Mantle of Stars, and Calling to our Ancestors***.

She's also the author of urban fantasy and paranormal romance novels including ***Werewolves in the Kitchen, A Winter Knight's Vigil, A Fading Amaranth, and The White Dress, the Autumn Leaves***. Her mythic artwork and designs are used for magazine covers, book covers, and illustrations, as well as decorating many walls, shrines, and other spaces. Shauna is passionate about creating rituals, experiences, spaces, stories, and artwork to awaken mythic imagination.

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Cailleach and Brigid by Deanne Quarrie

At Imbolc we celebrate the first stirrings of spring. It is a time of rebirth and new hope. The earth begins to wake from its winter slumber, the snow begins to melt, and the first green buds and shoots appear, bringing with them the promise of spring. For most of us it is still bitterly cold outside, and if you live in New England like me snow still covers the ground. It's hard to imagine spring is just around the corner when you are still shoveling snow from your driveway.

The transformation we witness each year is a sacred one, one that plays out in the myth of the Celts, and in the way they viewed the Goddess. During this time of year the myths of Cailleach and Brigid come to mind. While Cailleach, the Winter Hag, is churning the clouds above and dumping snow on my driveway, I know soon she will transform into Brigid the lovely maiden of spring. Each Imbolc we stand at the precipice, a time of transformation, a time between times. Just as Cailleach transforms into Brigid so too can we be inspired from their myths to transform ourselves, to leave the old and no longer useful behind and to drink from the sacred well in order to be renewed.

Cailleach is arguably one of the most ancient Goddesses of the Celts. In fact she may even be a pre-Celtic Goddess. Many historians have hypothesized that she may have been the earth Goddess of the original inhabitants of Ireland, prior to their integration with the invading Celtic tribes. She is usually described as an old woman with white hair and blue skin. She was associated with a mountain in Ireland called the Slieve na Calliagh. The Slieve na Calliagh is made up of jagged rocks which may be why she was sometime said to have very sharp teeth. Cailleach is best known as a Goddess of cold, winter, and darkness. She was also a Goddess of storms and during the winter months she was said to ride through the air on the back of a wolf, bringing snow and ice to the world below. According to my Irish grandmother thunder is really the Cailleach sneezing! She also had a magick wand that she used to strike away any hints of green on the winter landscape. While Cailleach seems like a dark figure she is a necessary side of the Goddess. She is destruction, the bareness of winter, she can bring chaos and change just as swiftly as she can call up a winter blizzard, but we must remember she also wears another face. On Imbolc the Winter Hag melts away, transforming into Brigid the Goddess of fire and inspiration.

There are several legends as to how Cailleach's transformation into Brigid occurs. In Scotland it was believed that each year Cailleach held the Goddess Brigid captive in a cave, preventing her radiant light and warmth to shine on the earth. In some stories Cailleach turns to stone at the first signs of spring, and Brigid escapes bringing with her renewed fertility and warmth to the world. At Samhain Cailleach awakes and captures Brigid, once again holding her captive through the winter. In another version Cailleach travels to a magickal isle (sometimes said to be the Isle of Skye) where there is a miraculous Well of Youth. On Imbolc she drinks from the well and transforms into Brigid.

Cailleach and Brigid's myths remind us how the Celts divided the year. Although we recognize four distinct seasons, the Celts generally divided their year in two, the dark and light half of the year. Although triple Goddesses are prevalent in Celtic myths, dual or two faced Goddesses are just as common. Cailleach and Brigid are two aspects of the same Goddess, their changing faces mirroring the changing of the seasons, and the way the Celts viewed these seasonal cycles. At times these dual Goddesses appear as a Crone and Maiden, other times they are two sisters. We see this in Aine and Grian, two Irish sister Goddesses, who each ruled half of the year. Whether we see the Goddess as Maiden, Mother and Crone, or as the Winter Crone and Spring Maiden, these two aspects of the Goddess are intrinsically linked. The darkness of the Crone will always give way to the rebirth and new beginning of the Maiden.

So if there is still snow in your driveway, remember that Cailleach is about to take a drink from that sacred well, soon she will be the Goddess of spring. And as the earth around us begins its transformation think about what you can change in your own life. If you were to drink from the Well of Youth what transformation would you seek?

Below is a simple ritual I use each year to invoke Cailleach and Brigid's energies during Imbolc. May you drink from the sacred well and be renewed!

Drinking from the Well of Transformation:

Brew a cup of your favorite tea or if you prefer use wine. Take the cup to your sacred space. Place two candles on your altar, one on each side. Blue for Cailleach and a red candle for Brigid. Light the candles and place your cup in-between the two candles on the altar.

Take a few minutes to ground and center. See yourself in a small boat. The boat glides soundlessly across the waves, and a cold winter wind blows across you. Soon your boat glides up to the isle's shore and you step onto the green earth. Shaded by a grove of trees you see an old stone well. The well waters shine with their own light, and you know you have found the Well of Youth. Take a few minutes to consider what kind of transformation you wish to bring into your life. Are there old habits that you need to shed, new ventures you wish to start? When you are ready you dip your hands into the water and drink.

When you are ready take the cup in your hands and hold it over the altar, saying:

*Cailleach, blue hag of winter,
Churning storms and chaos in your wake,
Lady of thunder, winter, and cold,
Drink now from the sacred well,
Bring transformation,
And let me change as you do each year*

Hold your hands over the cup. Visualize a brilliant white light filling the cup, the light of Cailleach and Brigid, the light of new beginnings and transformation. Then take a sip of your magickal brew. Feel the blessings of Cailleach and Brigid filling you, revitalizing you, as the Goddess' energies renew and awaken the earth each spring. When you are ready say:

*Like Cailleach I transform,
I drink from the sacred well,
The darkness within transformed to new light,
I shine like Brigid of the green mantle,
Renewed and transformed by the Goddess!*

Pour the remaining liquid outside as an offering to Cailleach and Brigid.

Deanne Quarrie. D. Min. is a Priestess of The Goddess and a practicing Druid. She is the author of five books. She is the founder of the [Apple Branch](#) and [Beyond the Ninth Wave](#) where she teaches courses in Druidism, Celtic Shamanism, and Feminist Dianic Wicca and mentors those who wish to serve others in

their communities. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Ocean Seminary College and is the founder of [Global Goddess](#), a worldwide organization open to all women who honor some form of the divine feminine.

Dark Moon Musings by Katy Ravensong

February 20, 2012



*I come to you, Mother, for myself and the others.
I join my power with my sisters and brothers.
We join hands in a circle and here none are weak.
We support each other in the things we seek.*

*I give you, Mother, my hopes and my fears.
I give you my laughter and my tears.
I reach down deep and give you my pain
and receive from you good health again.*

*I give to you my poverty, my lack
and reach for abundance, taking it back.
Insecurity, unhappiness, all such as this
in my life are not welcome. These I will not miss.*

*Your presence and power surrounds like a cloak
and I rise up strong like the mighty old oak.
All that is unneeded I leave at your feet.
I step forth in your power – a new day to greet.*

*I thank you, Dark Mother, for my time in your cave
and for knowing my troubles sank under your waves.
Your New Moon brings a beginning, a fresh start
and I am thankful with all my heart.*

Embrace Possibility by Molly Remer

Usually when I create a new design for a pendant or figurine, I know who I'm making when I begin. Last spring, I created a new design who emerged as a mystery. When she was finished, I loved her. But, I didn't know her name or what she represented. I asked on my Facebook page for input and I got some suggestions...

Druid priestess. Seraphine. High Priestess. Tri-Goddess. Mother. Celtic goddess.

I took her to the woods and held her in my hand and spoke in a little sing-song of emergence...



She who unites body, mind and spirit. She who calls upon earth, sky, and river. She who speaks to oaks and mountains. She who sings with the ocean. She who opens arms to the sky and feels raindrops bless her brow. She who circles in the moonlight. She who gathers with her sisters. She who hears the drumbeat of the earth. She who tunes her heartbeat to this call. She who steps in time with the wind.

Of this earth, for this earth, on this earth.

She holds the vision. She holds the space. She holds an ancient wisdom.
Encoded in her cells, written on her bones...

The mantle settles around her shoulders.

Sinking into belly, bones, and blood,

until she knows,

without a doubt,

that this is who,

she really is.

The next afternoon, a friend who had a prototype version of the new pendant sent me a message suggesting a title: *Embrace Possibility*. I thought about what I'd written in the woods. I thought about how different women saw different names for her and I knew that THIS was it. *Embrace Possibility*. What message does she hold for you?

This experience returns to me as we greet a new year and all its potential. After the reflective mood of fall and the celebratory spirit of the holiday, I find that January has entered my life with a frosty attitude. When I was preparing to give birth to my new baby in October, I'd mentally prepared to be "off" until January, which felt far away at the



time. Now that it actually is January, I recognize a tautness in my chest and mind at the return to "real life." My body feels tight and constricted and I am increasingly irritable and frustrated, like an animal emerging from hibernation. At the same time, I have a lot of plans, visions, and ideas for the new year. I feel a brightness and aliveness and a deep excitement about the birth of a new year, but I notice myself struggling with a sensation of needing or wanting all of these things to be done *right now*, at this very moment. Hurry up! I suspect this is because at another level, I still actually want to hibernate in my rocking chair with my baby. The call of the hermit self remains strong, the call of the outside world is clamoring with increasing intensity for my attention, and the buzzing sparks of energy and vision in my mind say, *set us free. Let us ignite!* Can I allow myself to continue to sit for just a while longer, embracing possibility?

--

Molly is a priestess, writer, teacher, artist, and activist who lives with her husband and children in the Midwest. She is a doctoral student in women's spirituality at Ocean Seminary College and the author of [Womanrunes: A guide to their use and interpretation](#). Molly and her husband co-create at Brigid's Grove: <http://brigidsgrove.etsy.com> and she blogs about theapoetics, ecopsychology, and the Goddess at <http://goddesspriestess.com>.

First Light: A poem of Imbolc and Candlemas by Amy Martin

A flame appears, lit from within
It emerges, tender light
Upon snow and ice
Upon brown winter fields
Whose wan color hides
The busy roots beneath

On stem and branch
Buds thrust against the cold
The promise of leaf and flower
Its own warming reward

Potent waiting, energy storing
Nascent is the spring

Forgotten Goddesses, Imbolc 2015 by Katy Ravensong and Yzabel O'Cronin

"As it has been, so it shall be!
Your sacred flame is tended by me
and we who are Keepers of the Flame
shall evermore honor your name."

Burn, Brighid's fire, burn so bright.
Goddess, grant your vision to me.
Guide my wandering path tonight
with your sacred flame.



(author and artist unknown to me)

This is said to be the traditional chant of a flamekeeper. While it is written for Brighid, it could easily be altered to use for any goddess. Brighid is far from being a forgotten goddess, though at one time her followers went underground as all goddess worshippers had to. She is “the goddess that would not die” so the Catholic Church turned her into a saint.

Once upon a time, matriarchal societies were the norm and people lived in peace under matriarchal rule. According to Elinor W. Gadon, “warlike people overran Old European civilizations and imposed their male-dominated hierarchy.... Wherever Indo-Europeans ruled, the goddess would have to share her domain with male gods. In some places the transition was precipitous and brutal, in others gradual, as her powers were co-opted one by one.”

Today I honor all goddesses who have been obscured by the mist, out of sight from the patriarchal society that would gladly put them completely out of existence if possible. Thank Goddess it is not possible. A 'gospel' song from the last century said that the powerful current of a river isn't lessened because it runs underground, that it is even more powerful after forcing its way through solid rock. The songwriter was writing of the Christian church. However, this can also apply to the goddesses who have been forced away from the mainstream, who become 'forgotten goddesses' for a time, then are brought back into our consciousness. When there were no acknowledged goddesses (as deity) people found goddesses to worship – usually the stars of movies or television shows – such as Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo, Sophia Loren, etc. Now the Goddess has returned and we can honor Her and once more feel complete.

Brighid called to me and Tlachtga called to my partner Yzabel. If you are truly seeking the Feminine Divine, she will make Herself known to you. Ask – and wait. Trust your instinct, your 'gut feeling'. There is no set timetable. **Your** goddess will find you – or allow you to find her. She might be one of the more well-known goddesses such as Brighid (Brigit), Isis, Bast, Hecate, or the Morrigan (among others). However, She may be one of the lesser-known goddesses from any pantheon – goddesses from Aurora to Zephyritis – that is to say from A to Z.

There are many ways to show your dedication to the goddess. The simplest way is to prayerfully light a candle and ask for Her blessings and protection. One prayer is:

“Mother of our mothers
foremothers strong
Guide our hands in yours.
Remind us how to kindle the heart.”
(Caitlin Matthews)

There needs to be balance. Above all, we each need to find our own balance. That might be a different place for each of us. The female is represented by the goddess, the male by the horned stag, bull, or ram. The male and female together represent new life.

Truth, too, is different for each of us. If I asked two people who lived in different cities how to get to Atlanta, GA beginning where they live, there would be 2 different sets of directions. Yet each would be right for the person who gave it to me and neither right for me who lives somewhere other than the two I asked. No one could tell Person A that his directions were wrong because they were not identical to the directions given by Person B. Both are different. Both are correct. So we recognize that there are truths which are different from ours. “Each of us must find wisdom in his own way. Mine is one way, yours another. Perhaps we each need more of what the other knows.” (“The Lonely Men” - L'Amour)

On behalf of Yzabel and myself, we wish you a most wondrous Imbolc as the promise of Spring and the lady Brighid puts the Callieach of Winter to flight for another year – even if where you are is still buried in ice and snow. It is brutally cold here – but the trees are beginning to bud – in January! The Wheel turns! Spring will come!

Sources:

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L'Amour, Louis. “A Trail of Memories: The Quotations of Louis L'Amour”. Bantam. 1988.

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From Belladonna's Garden by Dawn Thomas

Years ago I wrote an herb column but real life got in the way and I stopped writing on regular basis. Now my life is back on track and I would like to pick up where I left off. I am starting the New Year with new goals and want to share with others. Last year I revived my herb garden. I have found having a garden and growing herbs in Florida is a challenge. Almost nothing grows in sand and I had to add organic compost to be halfway successful. The trees have grown around the garden so I have some shade for the more delicate plants. While cleaning up the garden I must have disturbed a wasp nest that was in the butt of one of the crane statues. The wasps were not happy with me and stung me several times. Oh well; live and learn.

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)

Other names: Albahaca, American Dittany, “Our Herb,” St. Joseph's Wort, Sweet Basil, Witches Herb, Nijilika, Balanoi, Feslien



I am starting the year off with an herb most of us know and use regularly. Most people use basil when cooking Italian themed foods but did you know there are other uses for it? Basil as a tea is good for constipation, nausea, vomiting. It is a warming herb and helps relieve menstrual cramps.

Basil is a member of the mint or *Labiatae* family. It is a tender annual with origins in Asia. In nature it is found in hot, humid regions. It likes a warm climate and grows well indoors as long as it gets plenty of natural light. It needs rich and well-drained soil to grow. To propagate, you need to sow seeds in the spring or summer. It grows tall, about 18 inches and has small white, pink and purple tinged flowers. The leaves are small, bright and shiny. They also resemble small spinach leaves. You can pinch the flowers off to force the plant to grow bushy. The leaves have a spicy scent to them especially when rubbed.



Cooking

Most people use sweet basil in cooking but there are many varieties of basil. Leaves can be chopped and put in an ice cube tray then frozen. I included two recipes for using basil. I found a delicious spring salad that is easy to make.

Salad Ingredients:

- Spring Mix or Field Greens
- Carrot, thinly sliced
- Radish, thinly sliced
- Hard-boiled egg, sliced
- Pesto (recipe below)

Pesto Ingredients:

- 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves

2 cloves of garlic
1/4 cup pine nuts
2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pesto Directions:

Combine basil, garlic, and pine nuts in a food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped. Add ½ cup of the oil and process until fully incorporated and smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Add the remaining oil and pulse until smooth. Pour into a large bowl and stir in cheese.

Salad Directions:

Rinse greens and pat dry. Place greens, carrot slices and radish slices in a bowl. Add the pesto and toss. Place the hard-boiled egg on top. Enjoy!



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Rinse greens and pat dry. Place greens, carrot slices and radish slices in a bowl. Add the pesto and toss. Place the hard-boiled egg on top. Enjoy!

The second recipe I found is a spring chicken soup with kale and basil. This recipe makes 4 servings. The preparation time is 20 minutes and cook time is 15 minutes.

Soup Ingredients:

1 1/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs, cut into 3/4-inch pieces
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 minced shallots or onion
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 cups chicken broth (or a 32-ounce container)
1 bunch of kale, washed, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces (6 cups lightly packed)
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
1/4 cup finely shredded Parmesan cheese

Soup Directions:

Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. In a large saucepan cook chicken and shallots in hot olive oil over medium heat for about 8 minutes or until chicken is browned and shallots are tender. Carefully stir in chicken broth. Bring to a boil then reduce heat. Stir in kale and simmer, uncovered for about 5 minutes or until kale is tender. Just before serving stir in fresh basil. Sprinkle servings with Parmesan cheese. This is perfect for those cold evenings when you need something to warm you up.



Medicinal Uses

Basil is used as a restorative. It is used to treat colds, indigestion, gastroenteritis, depression and exhaustion. Dioscorides thought basil was poisonous and some believed the name came from basilisk. Pliny recommended smelling basil in vinegar for when feeling faint. In Ayurvedic medicine, holy basil is known as *tulsi* and the juice is widely used in India. Holy basil is also an antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory.

Leaves

The fresh leaves can be rubbed on stings, bites, and skin conditions. The leaves can be muddled with cinnamon and cloves for chills. The juice can be added to honey for coughs. Inhalation of the leaves mixed with steam is good to provide relief of head colds.

Essential Oil



In aromatherapy, basil essential oil is used to increase concentration. Five to ten drops of the essential oil can be added to a bath for depression, nervous exhaustion or mental fatigue. Dilute five drops of essential oil in 10ml of a carrier oil and use it as a chest rub for asthma and other breathing ailments. The essential oil blended with a carrier oil can also be massaged for nervous conditions or as an insect repellant.

Caution Note: It is important to never apply essential directly to the skin without a carrier oil. It should also not be ingested.

Folklore and Magical Uses:

There are several magical uses for basil. Use it in love or money spells. You can plant basil and once established give it to someone you love. The love you infused in the plant will continue to grow. I found a story to place two basil leaves on a hot coal. If the two leaves quickly burn to ashes the relationship will be a harmonious. But if the leaves crackle and pop there will be quarrels. Basil can be carried in the pocket to attract wealth. Scott Cunningham wrote that witches were thought to drink ¼ cup of basil juice before they took flight.

Spell to Attract Money:

On a Thursday sprinkle some dried basil on a dollar bill (the biggest demonization you have). Fold the bill so the herbs cannot come out. With intention, place a paperclip on the folded dollar and say:

*Money, Money all around
Pick a penny off the ground
Find a way into my life
And rid me of financial strife
Silver coins will it rain
To ease me of my money pain*



When finished place the folded dollar in your pocket or wallet (wherever you keep your money). Carry it with you as a reminder of your impending gain.

Candle Magic

I have included two spells using candles. The love spell will open your heart to finding love. This spell is best performed on a Friday since the day is ruled by Venus. The money spell will help you attract prosperity to you. It is best done on a Thursday since the day is ruled by Jupiter.



Attracting Love

On a Friday take a pink or red candle and rub with basil oil. While you are doing this think of your intent: to open your heart to attract love. With the tip of a knife draw a heart on the candle. Light the candle and say three times:

*Let me seek and let me find
Love for me that is sweet and kind
Make the love have no bounds or limits
Open my heart and find love in it*

Concentrate on your intention and watch the flame until it goes out. This spell is best done on a Friday when the moon is waxing.

Attracting Prosperity

On a Thursday take a green candle and rub with basil oil. While you are doing this think of your intent: to open yourself to receiving prosperity. With the tip of a knife draw a dollar sign on the candle. Light the candle and say three times:

*Silver, gold and dollars too
These are things I want a few
In a pocket for me to find
To ease me of financial bind*

Concentrate on your intention and watch the flame until it goes out. This spell is best done on a Thursday when the moon is waxing.

Photos by Dawn Thomas

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Gourmet Goddess by Christine Smith

Happy Imbolc! Brigid is one of the Goddesses that was Christianized by the Irish people because they loved her too well to give her up. Her holiday is still celebrated, as Candlemas, and the traditional foods are still served. This bread is delicious, easy to make, and definitely not just for the holidays! I have been served this bread at many Bed and Breakfasts in Ireland and the UK. Sometimes it is fried in a pan and called farl. It is amazing with fresh butter and really sticks to the ribs. I hope you enjoy it at Imbolc, or any time you need a good ritual bread. Blessed be!

[Brigid](#) is traditionally honored by leaving a bread for her on the windowsill. And, on Saint Brigid's Day the whole family will also share bread in honor of the saint. Bake this oaten bread a few days before February 1st to be ready.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup flour
1 tablespoon sugar
3/4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons butter (small flakes)
3/4 cup uncooked oatmeal flakes
1 egg
1/2 cup buttermilk
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 20 minutes
Total Time: 30 minutes



PREPARATION:

Preheat your oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit; 220 degrees Celsius.
Grease a baking sheet.
Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl.
Add butter flakes, cutting them in with a knife until the mixture becomes crumbly.
Add oats and mix well.
Beat the egg with the buttermilk in a separate bowl.
Make a "well" in the dry ingredients then pour in the egg mixture and mix all with a fork until the crumbs hold together.
Form the dough into a ball and knead (on a floured surface). Add flour if the mass is still too sticky to work with.
Form the dough ball into a round bread and place it on the baking sheet.
Score a cross into the bread (do not cut through).
Bake for fifteen to twenty minutes, the bread should be medium brown.

Imbolc Solitary Ritual by Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas

Theme: Welcoming the increasing light

Altar Needs

White altar cloth
Five white candles
Cauldron
Pen and Paper
Chalice

To prepare for the ritual have a ritual bath with some bath salts. Play some relaxing music. Set up your altar with the five unlit candles - one for each element and one in the center to represent the Goddess.

Call the Elements and the Goddess:

Hail to the Spirit of the East, Element of Air. The winter winds blows in a new season. Please join me tonight. *Light the candle in the East.*

Hail to the Spirit of the South, Element of Fire. The warmth of fire makes me aware of the increasing light. Please join me tonight. *Light the candle in the South.*

Hail to the Spirit of the West, Element of Water. The melting snow flows into the rivers and provide water to the beginnings of new life. Please join me tonight. *Light the candle in the West.*

Hail to the Spirit of the North, Element of Earth. The fruits from the last harvest have provided the nourishment during these winter months. Please join me tonight. *Light the candle in the North.*

Great Mother Brighid, Guardian of poetry and smith crafts. I am honored to have you here and to bask in the light of your eternal flame. Please join me tonight. *Light the candle in the center of the altar.*

Tonight I celebrate the return of the sun and the rebirth of light.

Work and Meditation

Sit in front of your altar and think about what you would like to manifest in your life. When you are finished, write your thoughts on your piece of paper. Place the paper in the cauldron and light it to release your thought to the Elements and the Goddess. While the paper is burning say the following:

Great Mother Brighid
Watch over your daughter
Let your water heal me
Let your wind inspire me
Let your fire warm me
With your blessings and protection, I go in peace.

Drink from your chalice and offer blessings.

If you would like to make a corn dolly, now is the time to do that. As you are braiding continue your thoughts you want to manifest. When finished, open the circle.

Release the Goddess and the Elements

Great Mother Brigid, your growing light is increasing all around me. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and Farewell. *Extinguish the candle in the center.*

Spirit of the North, the earth is beginning to show new life. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and Farewell. *Extinguish the candle in the North.*

Spirit of the West, the rivers are rising and the water is warming. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and Farewell. *Extinguish the candle in the West.*

Spirit of the South, the days are growing longer and the sun is providing much needed warmth. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and Farewell. *Extinguish the candle in the South.*

Spirit of the East, there is a hint of March winds swirling around blowing in new life. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and Farewell. *Extinguish the candle in the East.*

The Circle is open but remains unbroken. Blessed Be!

Lunar Imbolc: Before Calendars by Amy Martin

Imagine a family gathered around a fire 4,000 years ago. In the livestock pen, the ewes are swollen, nipples heavy with milk, bellies pregnant with gestating lambs. This fertility in the mid of winter moves the family. Such grace to live on an Earth that so filled their needs.

“Tomorrow is February 2nd,” says one of them. “Let’s do something to honor this burgeoning life in the midst of winter.”

Of course, that never happened. Calendars like the one we know now date back to 700 BCE or so. Our observances of equinoxes, solstices and the midpoints between date back thousands of year prior, to our first impulses of spirituality.

We observe the solstices on the solstices, same with equinoxes. So why do we persist in observing Imbolc on February 2?

Without a calendar, early humans surely turned to the Full and New Moon phases for the seasonal midpoints. So what would lunar Imbolc be? My bet’s on the New Moon.

The second New Moon after Winter Solstice, the one that falls about midway between it and Spring Equinox, marks the point that increasing daylight is noticeable. Hope rises along with the sap in the trees.

For the past few thousand years, the Chinese and many others cultures of the East have embraced this New Moon, which falls in the sign of Aquarius, as the beginning of the New Year.

The swelling lunar crescent that follows the Sun as it sets in the west, and the waxing lunar phases that follow, echo the increasing daylight and tug at our hearts to go on.

Seize the lunar Imbolc for its succinct power to capture life's urgency in a concentrated sacred span. In 2015, the maximum point of the midwinter New Moon phase will occur on Wednesday February 18, at 29 degrees Aquarius.

The sign of contradiction, Aquarius is an air sign represented by a human pouring water. The contradiction that is our human nature, the way tenderness and anger, love and hate, attraction and repulsion, entwine. That contradiction is as essential to our humanity as our airy breath that emerges from our wet watery lungs.

Aquarius is the only sign symbolized by a mortal human being. Its New Moon beckons us strive for our highest ideals and take an active responsibility for moving humanity forward.

For the remaining lunar midpoints, see the Earth, Cosmos & Life Calendar <http://moonlady.com/2015-earth-cosmos-life-calendar> at Moonlady.com

Mindful Living by Dawn Thomas

Last year was a challenge for me. It is hard to find many good points although the biggest one was graduating from the University of Florida. This had been a lifelong goal for me and I am happy to say I am finally done. My health had been up and down most of the year. First were wasps' stings that lasted more than a month, then a wrist injury that left me relying on others for almost everything, followed by sinus surgery and subsequent infection and a bad fall.



I decided this year to begin the year off differently. I thought if I wanted to change things in my life I had to start within first. Just like so many that make resolutions at the New Year, I made a list of things. I want to lose some weight so I wrote I would like to gain good health. By saying I would like to gain good health instead of losing weight I am being positive. When I feel stressed I tend to pick at my cuticles. I placed small containers of a nice unscented hand cream in almost every room. Now when I feel the urge I just get a dab and rub in the cream.



In my pursuit of being healthy I have been watching what I eat. I started using an app and found my problem was not eating enough on some days then eating too much on others. My body would go into starvation mode and retain calories instead of burning them off. By monitoring my food (and water) intake I am becoming healthier. I also bought an activity tracker to track walking and exercising. I feel better about myself and am already seeing it in the mirror. I may not notice a change in weight but I see a more confidence healthy woman looking back at me.

I felt I lacked spirituality in my life. I haven't spent enough time acknowledging the Goddess and for that I am sorry. There was a time in my life when I was very religious. Then I realized it wasn't the religion that called to me it was the act of ritual. You don't have to

be religious to be spiritual. It is just a matter of being one with yourself and your higher power. Recently I made an inner journey to connect with Goddess. I saw Her but couldn't hear Her. A big red flag went up for me showing I was disconnected with my spirituality. I have made this a priority for the New Year. I now begin and end each day expressing my gratitude to Goddess by saying, *"I thank Goddess for all that I have and all that I am."*

I have been spending time just being. I sit with my eyes closed and listen to what my senses are telling me. Sitting by the fire pit at night I feel the heat of the fire on the bottom of my feet. I rub the arms of the wicker chair I am sitting in and feel the smooth texture. I open my eyes and look up into the palm trees. I see the fronds moving from the heat rising from the fire. I smell the fragrance of the pinyon wood as it burns and listen to the snapping and popping. These are small acts yet so important and so many times they are taken for granted or categorized as unimportant. Nothing earth shattering happened; it was just a quiet moment. I wanted to change that mindset within me. These should be the most important times.



I want to make the most of my life and have made some changes. Every day I take time to acknowledge someone or something and tell them how grateful I am. In the past I had become lax and took things for granted. I will not do that anymore. I want to live life to the fullest and make sure everyone knows they are special and appreciated. The time spent with loved ones should be a priority not a chore or hurried affair.

So for just one day tell your loved ones how you feel. Share with them your low points as well as your high points of your day and listen to them share with you. Truly listen to them. Don't try to interrupt or think about what you are going to say next. Just listen.



Change can be easy if you do it for just one day, every day.

Photos by Dawn Thomas

Dawn "Belladonna" Thomas is a High Priestess and Elder of The Apple Branch, a Dianic Tradition. She is the editor and book reviewer for the Oracle and was the Treasurer for The Global Goddess, a non-profit organization. She recently graduated from the University of Florida fulfilling a lifelong goal of completing her college education. She has been published in several magazines for her paper crafting designs. She is the owner of Belladonna's Garden and makes homemade soaps. She is an avid gardener and lives in Florida with husband.

Her Blog: <http://becomingbelladonna.blogspot.com/>

Moon Schedule Imbolc to Spring Equinox By Dawn "Belladonna" Thomas

(Times are Eastern Time)

Full "Quickening" Moon – February 3rd: 6:09 p.m.

4th Quarter – February 11th: 10:50 p.m.

New Moon – February 18th: 6:47 p.m.

2nd Quarter – February 25th: 12:14 p.m.

Full "Storm" Moon – March 5th: 1:05 p.m.

4th Quarter – March 13th: 1:48 p.m.

New Moon – March 20th: 5:36 a.m.

Moon Void of Course Schedule

Date	Starts	Ends
February 4 th	23:31 a.m.	February 5 th 12:46 a.m.
February 6 th	5:09 p.m.	February 7 th 1:44 p.m.
February 9 th	6:58 a.m.	February 10 th 2:05 a.m.
February 12 th	12:32 a.m.	11:46 a.m.
February 14 th	10:15 a.m.	5:24 p.m.
February 16 th	3:17 p.m.	7:13 p.m.
February 18 th	6:47 p.m.	6:47 p.m.
February 19 th	6:02 p.m.	February 20 th 6:15 p.m.
February 21 st	7:36 p.m.	February 22 nd 7:28 p.m.
February 23 rd	9:57 p.m.	February 24 th 11:54 p.m.
February 26 th	3:43 a.m.	February 27 th 7:50 a.m.
February 28 th	12:53 p.m.	March 1 st 6:34 p.m.

March 3 rd	3:48 a.m.	March 4 th 6:58 a.m.
March 5 th	1:36 p.m.	March 6 th 7:52 p.m.
March 8 th	9:24 p.m.	March 9 th 9:10 a.m.
March 11 th	3:46 p.m.	7:30 p.m.
March 13 th	7:11 p.m.	March 14 th 2:40 a.m.
March 16 th	4:02 a.m.	6:14 a.m.
March 17 th	2:18 p.m.	March 18 th 6:58 a.m.
March 20 th	5:36 a.m.	6:28 a.m.

Planting Days

February: 2nd, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th, 23rd, 24th, 27th, 28th
 March: 1st, 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 19th

Harvesting Days

February: 4th, 12th, 13th, 14th
 March: 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th

Moonlight by Sara WyndSpryte

Moonlight flowing,
 silver slipping down my
 skin.
 Eyes glow, hair shimmering,
 senses turn within.

Moonmaiden, Moon Mother,
 Moon Lady, which shall I be?
 All of the above and then some,
 The entirety of my being.

Feel the blessing, know the knowledge, cherish the love.
 So mote it be, as below
 so above.

Pagan Every Day: Goddess Light by Barbara Ardinger, PhD

February 13th

I've read somewhere that part of the alchemical process of transmutation involves breathing light into the physical body. In this exercise, which is said to go back to two early (and probably apocryphal) female alchemists, Isis the Prophetess and Mary the Jewess, the alchemist is directed to begin with seven days of mediation and fasting. As is typical with alchemical writing, we're not told whether we're breathing in ordinary daylight or some elevated mystical light, though my money's on the latter.

If you need some energy on a gloomy February day, here are a couple of techniques for bringing light into your body.

Kundalini yoga teaches pranic breathing. Prana is energy, which we see as light. Close your eyes, relax, take a deep, easy breath, and in your mind's eye see Brigid standing before you in her aura of sunlight. Ask the goddess for healing or inspiration, then ask her to breathe with you. (Don't worry—you're not going to inhale a goddess.) Inhale deeply and feel the aura of goddess light flowing into your nose, your throat, your lungs. This is literally, *inspiration*, breathing in. Send the goddess light flowing throughout your body and feel it settling into your stomach, your arms and legs, wherever it needs to be.

In color breathing, we fill our lungs with a healing color, which we send to parts of our body for healing. When you're feeling dispirited or uninspired, breathe in golden light. Pull it in through your nose and hold it for a moment in your head. Now exhale slowly and gently. Don't force the light to move. As you exhale, allow it to flow down your neck, shoulders, arms, and fingers. Let the golden light flow through your torso, touch your lower chakras, and flow down your legs to your toes.

Pagan Every Day: Finding the Extraordinary in Our Ordinary Lives (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006), a unique daybook of daily meditations, stories, and activities. Her new book, **Secret Lives** is a novel of magical realism about elderly women, younger women, good men, and mythological characters including the Green Man and the Norns gone mad in a modern world. Her earlier books are *Finding New Goddesses*, *Quicksilver Moon*, *Goddess Meditations*, and *Practicing the Presence of the Goddess*. Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in southern California. To purchase a signed copy of *Finding New Goddesses*, just send Barbara an email at bawriting@earthlink.net

Pagan Every Day: The Music of the Night by Barbara Ardinger, PhD

February 28th

The dark has much to tell us. Reader, if you wake up at three or four in the morning, try this meditation of extended hearing.

Lie still and listen. Listen to your own breathing. Listen to your heart beating, to the other sounds your body makes, chugging along, keeping you alive.

Now begin extending your hearing. If you sleep with a partner, listen to his or her breathing and other little sleep sounds. Feel the comfort these accustomed sounds bring you. What other sounds can you hear in your bedroom?

Extend your hearing through your home. Listen to the little noises your children make in their sleep, to your dog or cat doing what it does in the nighttime. Listen to the humming of the refrigerator, to the plumbing, to the settling of your foundation. As you listen, be glad for your home and its familiar noises.

Extend your hearing past your walls. Listen to the nighttime animals outside—an owl, a feral cat. Hear an occasional car or truck driving down your street. Who could that be driving at three in the morning, and where are they going in the dark? Wish them a safe arrival. Listen to your neighbors. In the building next to mine lives someone whose lights are on twenty-four hours a day and who plays soft classical music all night. I've never seen this person.

Extend your hearing to wider and wider areas. By now, you're not hearing very much with your physical ears. Perhaps you hear a train whistle or an occasional siren racing across town. If you hear a siren, send blessings. Listen with your imagination. Now, in the hours before the dawn, you are hearing the voices of the earth. What are they telling you? What are they singing about?

Pagan Every Day: Finding the Extraordinary in Our Ordinary Lives (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006), a unique daybook of daily meditations, stories, and activities. Her new book, **Secret Lives** is a novel of magical realism about elderly women, younger women, good men, and mythological characters including the Green Man and the Norns gone mad in a modern world. Her earlier books are *Finding New Goddesses*, *Quicksilver Moon*, *Goddess Meditations*, and *Practicing the Presence of the Goddess*. Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in southern California. To purchase a signed copy of *Finding New Goddesses*, just send Barbara an email at bawriting@earthlink.net

Seasons by Katy Ravensong

The saffron of the buttercup, the azure of the sky,
The crystal of the babbling brook - These bid my spirit fly.

The leaf careening lazily to join those below
To wait for the winter, to be covered with snow.

The pastel summer rainbow, the warm earth tones of fall,
The newness of spring greenery - I love them one and all.

The stark contrasts of winter, the blossoms when it's gone,
The cycles keep repeating. The seasons still move on.

The elemental thunder following the lightning's flare,
Then rain against my window - I'm content within my lair.

The butterfly floats lightly, trying her brand new wings.
The storm has passed on by. Outside a sparrow sings.

Mother Nature's a real lady, regal in all her seasons.
She deserves to be respected for oh, so many reasons.

So if the day is painted with a lazy hazy hue
Or cold, barren, and dreary, give the lady her due.

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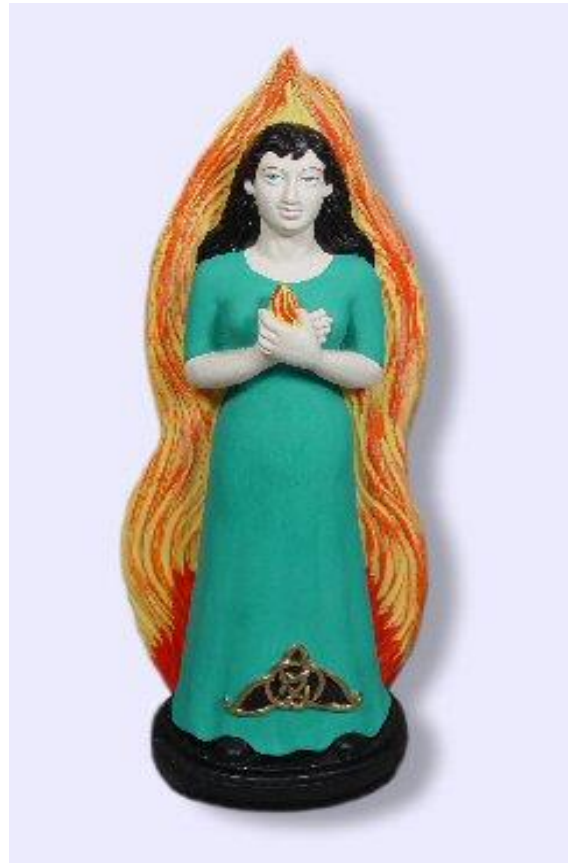
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The Charge of the Goddess Brighid by Willow CrowAngel, 1998

I know you hear my voice
many a night you have cried my tears,
I am the one who has been
With you all these years.
It is my song you sang,
A hymn to a goddess
Long before you knew a goddess
Walked your dreams and path.
Brighid mother, Brighid guardian
Brighid mother, Brighid guardian
Walk with me and
let me hold your hand
You know the words
You sing my poems,
Mother Brighid
Brighid guardian
Poetess of our dreams
Walk with me,

I teach you the same
Songs sung of old,
The message and the
Melody stay the same
I am the one who sings
The songs that give man hope,
I am the voice of poetry
Singing in your dreams.
Deep in the night,
When the moon is full,
Deep in a circle,
Voice chant my songs,
Do you hear their voices,
Calling to me?
I am the mother, the maiden, the Crone
Of all poets and poetry,
My gift is the poems that
Weave spells around the
Hearts of man
And give his dreams flight,
Raise your voices and chant
Mother Brighid , Brighid Guardian.
Do you hear my singing, Child?

It is my blessings
That are granted to all but
Understood by so few.
It is my poems that will reduce you
To tears like a child
Or make you soar among the clouds,
I am the poetess and guardian
Call in me and listen to hear my voice.



(used with permission of the author)

Statue from Sacred Source:

http://www.sacredsource.com/Brigid-statue-8-3_4-handpainted/productinfo/BGD/

The Moon by Jeri Studebaker

All the world over, it's goddesses, not gods, who are linked to the moon. It's easy to see why: as if by magic, women shed blood in time with the moon's cycles – and still live to tell the tale. This link between goddesses and the moon seems to be an old one, with moon goddesses apparently going back to the Palaeolithic. Just one example is the Venus of Laussel, a 20,000-year-old goddess figurine holding a crescent moon in her right hand.

In more than one ancient European culture the triple goddess was considered to be one and the same with the moon: the Virgin aspect of the goddess was embodied in the waxing moon, the Mother in the full moon, and the Crone in the waning moon. The moon "...was experienced as the Mother Goddess, so that ... the crescent moon was the young girl, the maiden; the full moon was the pregnant woman, the mother; the darkening moon was the wise old woman, whose light was within" (Baring and Cashford 1991: 18).

Personally, more than anything ever had, this analogy between the triple goddess and the moon drove home to me the concept of a deity being one and yet at the same time three. Although we experience the waxing, waning and full moons as three separate entities, we also know they're three different visual aspects of the same celestial body.

To those who worshipped her, the moon/goddess might also have represented the course of human life, its disappearance representing death, the three days of darkness time spent in the Great Mother's womb, and the first sliver of the waxing moon one's reincarnation into a new earthly body and lifetime: "With death they would have felt that they were taken back into the dark womb of the Mother and believed that they would be reborn like the moon" (Baring and Cashford 1991: 19).

SOURCES:

Baring, Anne, and Jules Cashford. 1991. *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. London: Viking.

Treasures of the Cailleach's Apron by Deanne Quarrie

Kinds of Crystals

In all the years that people have used and handled crystals, many have been identified by type and actually named. The naming is a result of the user's experience when working with a crystal. What that means is that you may have a completely different experience when you interact with a crystal. That is perfectly fine and completely normal. Each of our own experiences are valid and real for us. How we interact together is the key to using and working with crystals.

So let's talk about those experiences others have with their crystals and the most commonly known types of crystals.



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Double Terminated Crystals

- Double terminated crystals are created when formed in sand or soft soil. Because they have a point at both ends they can transmit their energy in two directions and can often be used as a sort of a bridge between two places.



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Faceted Crystals

- The number of facets on the faces of a crystal and even the number of point in a cluster will determine its use to each individual.



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Herkimer Diamonds

- Herkimers are a particular type of crystal that comes from a location in New York. They get their name from that place as well as from the brilliance of the crystal that causes them to look like diamonds. They are wonderful cleaners of toxins and for the removal of blockages.



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Elestials

- Elestials are also called skeletal quartz and are usually made in irregular patterns, revealing many layers and angles. As such they are good for revealing hidden layers of things!



- **Tabular Crystals**
 - Tabulars form with two flat planes making wide flat crystals. They are excellent for meditation stones – and for easily directing energy.



- **Scepter Quartz**
 - The scepter is a large crystal basically forming a crystal point at the top of a quartz rod. They are used to amplify energy.



- **Laser Wands**
 - Lasers are long thin crystals that concentrate and direct with great focus. They show pronounced tapering to a small terminated end.



- **Intergrown Crystals**
 - The intergrown is just as described – one crystal appearing to be growing around another! They are excellent for manifesting as well as for protection.



- **Phantom Crystals**
 - Phantoms show outlines and angles of earlier stages of growth. They show shadows and occlusions within. Best used in meditation.

There are also many types of crystals described by the angles, facets, windows, etc. I have found that while at times they might be useful as described by others – for me I prefer to use the crystal – become attuned to it and find out what it does best!

Nature is responsible for the creation of many formations, shapes and distinctive qualities of crystals but each one we encounter is unique and ready to work with us as needed. Take the time to hold them, sit with them and see if you can actually establish some form of communication with them. Remember to keep them clean and charged! They will love you and serve you well!

Deanne Quarrie. D. Min. is a Priestess of The Goddess, Witch and practicing Druid. She is the author of five books. She is the founder of the [Apple Branch](#) and [Beyond the Ninth Wave](#) where she teaches courses in Druidism, Celtic Shamanism, and Feminist Dianic Wicca and mentors those who wish to serve others in their communities. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Ocean Seminary College and is the founder of [Global Goddess](#), a worldwide organization open to all women who honor some form of the divine feminine.

Today by Dawn Thomas

I sit here with my senses,
I feel the temperature
growing colder
I see the days
becoming longer
I hear the bees
buzzing around the yard
I taste the soup
which comforts me
I smell the passionflower
blooming with delight

And for today,
I feel healthier
I see colors more vibrantly
I hear the stirring of life around me
I taste food with more flavors
I smell the exotic scents of spices

My life is more fulfilled
not just today
but every day



Dawn "Belladonna" Thomas is a High Priestess and Elder of The Apple Branch, a Dianic Tradition. She is the editor and book reviewer for the Oracle and was the Treasurer for The Global Goddess, a non-profit organization. She recently graduated from the University of Florida fulfilling a lifelong goal of completing her college education. She has been published in several magazines for her paper crafting designs. She is the owner of Belladonna's Garden and makes homemade soaps. She is an avid gardener and lives in Florida with husband. Her Blog: <http://becomingbelladonna.blogspot.com/>