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*Ord Brighideach*

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## *Blessed Imbolc*

Today we celebrate Brigid as both Goddess and Saint. We plant the seeds for all that we want to grow into fruition this year. The cold weather is still upon us, but the quickening of life is stirring inside the earth and we are slowly seeing new growth sprouting up through the snow. Brigid brings Her light with Her on this day and we start to see the sun staying out longer. What a glorious time of year, remembering how life is always renewed.



© PATRICIA ARIEL

Art By Patricia Ariel - I Searched the internet for this print and her correct website but was unable to find it. If anyone has any information on this print, please share it. I just found it so unique and beautiful.

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## Song of Brigid at Imbolc

## By Jennifer Lawrence

The hammer swings, the anvil rings  
At breaking of the dawn's first light.  
Like hallowed bell or solemn knell  
To sweep away the winter's night.

The flame that shines in bright smith's shrine  
Has burned a thousand years or more,  
Undimmed by woes or rage from those  
Who bring on famine, plague, or war.

It ever burns for those who yearn  
For healing, skill of hands, or art,  
We turn to Her whose mercies blur  
The pain that burdens every heart.

As gift to She who inspires me,  
I offer now my humble song,  
Its words of praise ring through my days,  
And makes the bond between us strong.

If these words meet approval sweet  
From her, I have achieved my aim;  
I am no bard, but labor hard  
That each verse sings her holy name.

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## Brighid's Day - Now Bank Holiday in Ireland

How exciting! Beginning this year, Ireland is acknowledging February 1st, Brighid's day, as a bank holiday. This marks the first public holiday to celebrate a woman in Ireland.

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## Brighid's Cloak

Our cloak is now sewn together from several squares made with love and donated by three of our members. (Erin J./ Elder Cill - Vigil 18) (Birch Cill - Vigil 13) & (Apple Cill - Vigil 1). Last night, it was left out hanging from a branch near my pond so that Brighid could bless it with her healing touch. This morning when I collected it, I made an offering to Brighid of milk, honey, and oats. Tonight I will draw the winning member's name.

Now don't forget! We will be doing this project again next year, so let's get started on our squares so that it can be even bigger for next year's winner.



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## A Member's Story

I first felt Her presence back in the 1960's when I was very young in our backyard. It was a pretty spot, with a beautiful tree on top of a hill and a little sand pile next to an old shed. I would sit in the sand pile playing with my toys and conversing with an entity

I knew was there. I didn't know who She was, only that She WAS. When we moved when I was 8, I was fearful that I would lose Her, that the magical moments would be gone.

I was so wrong. She was in the backyard again, a smaller yard, but it too had a magnificent maple tree. My parents put up a swing from one of its branches and I spent many days learning from Her from that swing. I intuitively began to become familiar with the magical properties of air, fire and earth. She left water for Poseidon, who I had already connected with. Our relationship grew stronger as did my knowing - that sense of the otherworld and so much more that comes from doing the work. We moved again when I was 12. I found Her at the top of a small secluded hill near our home and though our visits were no longer daily, I began practicing witchcraft, meditation and divination.

At 15 I taught a class on witchcraft for 150 people. After the class, 3 young ladies about college age approached me and after a few pleasantries and compliments on the class, asked if I wanted to join their coven. The warning bells went off. I could hear Her loud and clear. "NO!". I was as gracious as a teenager can be and turned them down. But the experience frightened me. She had never been so stern, so powerful. It made me hesitant. I slowly began to drift away from Her and my practice. Adulthood came. Every now and then I would read a book, light a candle, but I was hardly practicing. I knew by then though that the Lady had protected me that day in class, but I still kept my distance.

I left NY in 1990. A few years later a coworker who had become a dear friend came into my office. I distinctly remember her sitting down and saying "Can I ask you something personal?" Sure I said. "Are you a witch?" she bluntly asked. Without a moment's hesitation, I replied "Yes."

She was interested herself. Paganism had taken off by then and it was fairly easy for us to find teachers, classes and groups who practiced together. There was a local shop which held rituals for the Sabbats and we attended one for Imbolc. During the rite, the Priestess invited us to one by one approach the burning caldron and ask the Goddess Brighid anything we wanted. But when it was my turn, the Priestess suddenly looked dazed, and I heard that so familiar voice from my childhood, "Are you in, or are you out? Don't be dabbling about unless you are committed this time. Because if you're in there is no turning back." In that same forceful voice that had protected me so long ago. I told her I was in. Right then and there. I knew then who She was – Brighid, the great Celtic Goddess.

That was 25 years ago this Imbolc. I'm still all in. I rededicate myself to Her every Imbolc. Have I been the perfect Priestess? No, but I haven't walked away either, and I do my best. I am a Flamekeeper with the Ord Brighideach for the First and the Eighth

Shift in the Alder Cill. I love that schedule, because when you are accepting the flame from Brighid herself, you don't forget and it keeps me focused for the Eighth one. I'm sure those who have the 19th Shift feel the same since they pass it to Her. I write my own prayers for more formal rituals, but I usually just speak to Brighid as I would a beloved parent like I did as a child. I have been a member of a few covens along the way, and started my own in 2005. We're still practicing together. Each Imbolc we select a new God and Goddess to work with during the year as a whole which has opened many doors for our members. We still work with our individual Deities though. More traditionally for Imbolc, we read poems, share crafts we have worked on through the year and bless candles. Not quite sure what I will do personally for this 25th anniversary but I know this piece is part of it, in honor of Her and all Her Blessings upon each and every one of us who tend Her flame.

By Autumn P

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## Brighid Doll

I'm sure many of you share in the tradition of creating a Brighid doll and making her a special bed on Imbolc Eve next to the hearth. Usually a new doll is created annually. However, for me this very special doll which was gifted to me by our member Patti B., will be used each year as a reminder of Patti's kindness and of how special our group here at Ord Brighideach truly is. Patti, I will truly treasure her for many years to come, so thank you once again.



The cloth she is holding is my Bratog Bride. I hang it outside each year on Imbolc Eve for Brigid to bless with her healing touch. Then I use it throughout the year when I, or a family member, are not feeling well. The rosary beads were created by Luneia Weatherstone. I was lucky enough to purchase one of her gorgeous pieces.

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## Isn't She Lovely!

I was also gifted another very special doll by our member Morgayne. I have looked at this doll for sometime on Etsy, even before I realized the artist was a member of the



Ord. There is such incredible detail stitched into her that I'm amazed each time I look at her. She has a special place in my meditation room now, so that I can always see her as I settle in for prayers and meditation. Thank you so much Morgayne. If you would like one for yourself, visit her Etsy store [here](#).



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## Her Light By Jennifer Lawrence

Red flame, white fire,

And I know that she is with me, always.  
In the warmth of an embrace that is not seen,  
In the softness of whispered words heard only by the soul's ear,  
In the bright spark of her inspiration, shaping words to song.  
Brigid, guiding my steps;  
Brigid, showing the way;  
Brigid, watching over all.  
Hand that strengthens the smith's hand;  
Smile that heals the sick;  
Voice that rings with the flash of the muse's gift.  
Lady, three-in-one,  
Gentle and mild,  
Be with me, fearless, and  
Guard over me when I fear;  
Be with me, unraging, and  
Calm my temper when fury strikes;  
Be with me, sweet calm one, and  
Comfort me those dark nights  
When sorrow comes.

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## A Special Thank You

I wanted to take a moment to thank a few people who have had special roles in the rekindling of Ord Brighideach this year. First, is Mike M. not only has he been checking the security of our website for years now, but he is also the person responsible for contacting me last year when he found that the old website was gone. Without his dedication to the Ord, we would not be here, together, celebrating Her day this year. Mike, I hope you know that I greatly appreciate having you as a part of Ord Brighideach.

To Jak Geneb, who assists me as a moderator in our Facebook group. It's such a blessing to know that I have someone else to watch and post in the group. Thank you for all your help.

To Ivy, who emailed and volunteered to proofread the newsletters for me. She honestly made my day when she reached out because writing is actually a huge fear of mine, and putting myself out there like this was a huge step. Knowing that she is

here to help and catch my mistakes is incredible. So thank you, Ivy, for volunteering for this task. It means a lot.

To the three wonderful flame keepers who were mentioned above regarding our Brigid's cloak, thank you for working with me to make this possible. I can't tell you how excited I was when I received your packages of squares in the mail! To have an idea is one thing, but when others actually assist, it takes the project to a whole new level. So thank you for your incredible work. Can't wait to see how big next year's cloak will be.

And to each of you that have reached out in support of my leadership this year, know how grateful I am for your kind words of encouragement. I'll be honest, in 2019 when Rose originally mentioned to me about becoming the next Abbess, I didn't feel I had it in me to serve you all in a way that Ord Brighideach deserves. But as I've watched us grow over this year, and have seen the interaction on Facebook, my confidence has slowly begun to rise. Perhaps Rose knew exactly what she was doing when she tried so hard to convince me that I could be successful.

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## Tribute Page for Kim Diane & Rose

In our last newsletter, I mentioned how I would very much love to have a page on the website dedicated to our former two Abbesses. I created the page on our website, but unfortunately have not received any input from our members. So this is my gentle reminder that I would love for all of you to share your experiences with Ord Brighideach from the days when Kim Diane and Rose were leading.

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## Red Tent Forum

In our last newsletter, I announced the launching of The Sisterhood of the Sacred Flame and the forum created for women of all ages to come together. Although we are a branch of Ord Brighideach, I want to assure our male members that matters of Ord Brighideach are not part of the forum. All of that information is here in the newsletters, or posted in the Facebook group. It has been an exciting month with 13 wonderful members joining the forum. I've decided to extend the offer at the discounted rate of \$19.00 for the yearly membership until February 15th, 2023. After that, the rate goes

up to \$29.00. If you didn't get a chance to check out the website in the last newsletter, go ahead and look at it now. [www.sisterhoodofthesacredflame.com](http://www.sisterhoodofthesacredflame.com)

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If you would like to have your own story, poetry or art included in our future newsletters please write me @ [sorchaaelfrunstarr@gmail.com](mailto:sorchaaelfrunstarr@gmail.com).

Brightest Blessings,

Sorcha Aelfrun Starr (Abbess)

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