

Happy Imbolc

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Happy Imbolc! Today is the pagan cross quarter day of Imbolc. I suggest we celebrate with a small ritual at this week's Wednesday gathering. Perhaps lighting candles and creating new passion for the year ahead - which would fit in well with the topic of "the passion test" for Wednesday. Any other ideas?

While less famous than Solstice or Beltane, Imbolc, also known as Candlemas, is the re-awakening of the Earth Mother so that She may return to make our lands green again. It is also a time when the Sun God is encouraged to grow in strength so that He may awaken the Goddess from Her Winter slumber.

Imbolc actually means "in womb". This refers to all the Life that is laying beneath the hard frozen ground, in our Earth Mothers "womb", waiting to come forth in the Spring. It is up to the Sun God to warm the frozen ground and stir these seeds so they may blossom.

In our tradition, we take this time to encourage others and ourselves. The dark Winter months tend to depress many people, and several seem to give up hope. On Imbolc we restore that hope in order to survive. We light candles in a variety of ways to show that there will be brighter times and hopefully to encourage that inner light within all of us to ignite and flare.

Interestingly Imbolc may also be seen as the pagan version of Valentine's Day, with a de-emphasis of 'hearts and flowers' and an appropriate re-emphasis of Pagan carnal frivolity. This also re-aligns the holiday with the ancient Roman Lupercalia, a fertility festival held at this time, in which the priests of Pan ran through the streets of Rome whacking young women with goatskin thongs to make them fertile. The women seemed to enjoy the attention and often stripped in order to afford better targets.