Candlemas History

Candlemas or Imbolc marks the opening out of the natural world, ovulation, and eventually emerging into the pure light of spring. Candlemas is when we come spiraling out again from the darkness. The spiral is the matriarchal symbol handed down from mother to daughter.

Imbolc or Candlemas a time of rebirth, or reincarnation. Our death at Samhain is followed by gestation in the dark space (the womb of the goddess) and rebirth in a new body at Candlemas.

The word Imbolg, Oimelc, or Imelg means ewe milk. It is the time of the birth of lambs in which brings back the flow of the ewe’s milk.

Candlemas or Imbolc also means in the belly. It is the festival of maiden goddesses. Traditionally it is the time in which agricultural implements (like ploughs, seed machines) are blessed in preparation of the planting. Livestock are also blessed in preparation of newborns. It is also a time of blessing the new fire. Even though people are using their fires for warmth, on this day the fire will be extinguished, the hearth blessed and cleaned, and a new fire will be kindled and blessed.

Imbolc is the beginning of spring even though there may still be winter weather. If you look closely you will see buds forming. It is the time of weather forecasting. On Feb 2 if there is bad weather and cloudy skies than it is said that there will be an early and prosperous summer. If one sees sunshine on Feb. 2 than there will be 40 more days of cold and snow.

In Ancient England, this day was called “the wives feast day”. It was a fertility festival.

There was an old Roman custom of burning candles to the goddess Februa, mother of Mars, to scare away negative energy.

The Celtic goddess Brighid or Brigentis is a triune moon goddess. She is the goddess of knowledge and healing. The goddess of fire, poetry, healing all things that go along with the creative powers of the onset of spring. She is a maiden goddess honored at the time of Imbolc.

The Poles have a legend that Mary, the mother of God blessed a thunder candle called Matka Baska Gromnicsna. Her candle protects villages from hungry wolves.

The Latins called this day Candlemas because many candles were lit up as they did on Lupercalia, the festival of Proserpine, whom her mother Ceres searched for with candles.

This day is a time of the rebirth of spirit.