

Tend These Fires February 1, 2026 Rev Brigid Beckman

Message

Six months ago, we celebrated Day of Dead, and Samhain and I asked us to think about someone – a family ancestor, a friend who became “chosen family” or a wise teacher– someone who had died, but whose inspiration is part of you. And then I asked us to consider– what kind of an ancestor will we be? What is the legacy we hope to leave behind?

My ancestor's legacy is held in part by my name and includes Brigid of Ireland, the ancient Celtic triple goddess-- maiden, mother and crone; and the 5th century abbess (and according to some stories, bishop), St. Brigid of Kildare. My legacy includes my mother's grandmother Brigid Mahoney, whose cells and name and stories I carry though she died long before I was born. The legacy of naming is carried forward by my fierce, fiery, sweet granddaughter, Keeley Brigid.

Rituals around today's Imbolc feast day mark a deep understanding of nature's rhythms, “in this great turning” of the wheel of the year– the earth's softening and light returning as winter turns toward spring. The legends in Ireland about Brigid are a mix of ancient celtic, druid lore, and stories of the life and miracles of, Brigid of Kildare, thought to be born around 450 CE, founder of a monastery and patron saint of poetry, smithworks, unwed mothers, and healing. Her symbols include the fire of justice and mercy, the mantle (cloak) of compassion, the well of hospitality, and a cross woven from rushes, a sign of deep faith.

I didn't always love explaining on the first day of school that the teacher's list might say Mary B.Beckman, but the B stands for Brigid, and yes my parents DO know this. (And meet my sister Gen, Mary G. Beckman). But the legacy of my name and Irish heritage is part of my reminder of the company I keep, the shoulders I stand on. My name and its history has become a home, and symbol, for the legacy I aspire to leave to Keeley B, and Eli, and all the lives my life has touched, and will touch.

*Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me.*
—Emma Lazarus

My legacy includes those ancestors who were the huddled masses yearning to be free. And so does yours, unless your heritage includes the First Peoples of this land, those nations and tribes that European explorers, then colonizers, then US government actions decimated, but that are still alive today. Perhaps your ancestors came with the privilege of wealth. Perhaps they came stolen and in chains, disappeared from their native shores. While our country has not ever fully lived up to its ideals and aspirations, it has also not ever fully forgotten that We the People are the tempest-tossed.

We Shall Be Known Karisha Longaker (MaMuse)

We shall be known by the company we keep,
by the ones who circle 'round to tend these fires.
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap
the seeds of change alive from deep within the earth.

It is time now, It is time now that we thrive.
It is time we lead ourselves into the well.
It is time now, and what a time to be alive.

In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love.
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love.

We had a snow day sandwiched between my talks inspired by these lyrics: part one— “We Shall Be Known” and today’s part two, “Tend these Fires.” Sandwiched between today’s Daily Word, and yesterday’s is an essay titled “Finding Faith in the Fire,” where the author recounts her long, painful journey through the fires of personal struggle to finding a deeper faith.

Here is the Daily Word from Jan 31— **Holy**

As a divine expression of life itself, I am holy, made in the image and likeness of God. When I behold the world through spiritual eyes, I see holiness everywhere. I

embrace all life with an open heart, knowing I am one with the totality of existence. I walk in reverence and live my life aware of the sacred-ness that surrounds me.

Recognizing the holiness in others opens my heart to them in compassion. Each of us is an essential part of God, and I treat all others as the precious beings they are. My life is sacred, a living prayer. I live each day **breathing deeply, relaxing fully, and meeting each moment with kindness and clarity**. I feel deep gratitude to live and love as the holy being I am.

Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.—Exodus 3:5

And a bit of the Daily word we heard today:

“I envision divine love opening my heart and kindness inspiring my words. The sacred connection I feel in prayer elevates me above the cares and concerns of daily life, **making it easier for me to be serene and unperturbed by any irritations I encounter**.

My intention is to carry the gifts of spiritual living with me always, my blessings to share.”

Last weekend I was NOT serene and unperturbed. I did not see holiness in the headlines. My heart was broken, troubled deeply by the images of the ongoing violence happening in Minneapolis, by the deaths and brutal cruelty perpetrated by those claiming to serve and protect here in our country, and the ever present fires of suffering around the world.

I am so grateful for our unexpected snow day last week. And thanks to that gift of time, I want to add a “YES, AND” to those Daily Word reflections on the power of and call of remembering we are made in the image and likeness of the Creator. Our lives ARE a sacred prayer...

On Friday night after Roger and I had made that tough call to cancel, I signed up for a Centering Prayer and Wise Action summit. I’d looked at it 3 or 4 times, but figured it might be one more thing I signed up for and then “didn’t get to” the recorded sessions.

The final keynote speakers were Episcopal Priest, Fr. Adam Bucko and his partner, Buddhist teacher, Kaira Jewel Lingo. Fr. Adam shared this, available [also in his substack](#):

Contemplation is not a spiritual vacation, not a way to numb ourselves or escape the world. We do not pray to get away from our lives. We pray in them, in our fear, our grief, our anger, our confusion, and we bring all of it into stillness.

To sit in contemplation is to open ourselves to the Living Presence at the heart of everything, a quiet but insistent movement toward wholeness, toward justice, toward communion. This movement is not automatic. It longs to live through human bodies, human choices, human courage. It needs consent.

And contemplation is where that consent is learned.

That presence...sharpens our sight. It breaks through denial. It refuses to let us make peace with what dehumanizes.

Real contemplation clarifies rather than comforts. It trains us to see violence without becoming violent, to face lies without becoming cynical, to stay tender in the presence of suffering. It is subversive because it will not allow us to privatize our spirituality or turn prayer into a commodity for personal well-being.

The words of our vision and mission lead us right there! From the spiritual awakening of us all— to our call toward Love in all actions that moves us to wholeness, toward justice, toward the communion of ALL BEINGS that we embrace through prayer and service in our community and in the world.

The gift of time spent connecting and CONSENTING to the Presence alive in me— brought me back last Sunday, to seeing holiness even in the headlines. Not comfort, exactly, but the clarity of seeing with God eyes, my eyes of lovingkindness, my eyes that could once again search out those stories of neighbors staying tender. Communities offering care and BEING that Presence to each other.

To that litany of sacred texts that I shared two weeks ago, here are two readings that Christians following the lectionary readings will hear proclaimed today:

Micah, 6:8

The Holy of Holies has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does Love require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your Creator?

And our now familiar version of the Beatitudes, from Matthew 5: 1 - 12

““Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who remember that God is your source, you poor in spirit; live knowing the kingdom of heaven is here.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who weep and mourn; live AS the compassion and comfort of God.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who are meek; live knowing the reign of God is now.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who hunger and thirst for justice and are merciful; work for God’s justice and mercy now.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who embody the pure heart of God; live knowing you are the hands and heart and eyes of God.”

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who are the peacemakers; your sacred presence stands up, speaks up, works for peace in all ways; you are the beloved sons and daughters of God.”

THE DIVINE PRESENCE NEEDS OUR CONSENT! Our enthusiastic consent, our YES activates the always present Divine in us so that we live fully into our sacred purpose.

WHAT IS OURS to DO after we CONSENT to AWAKENING TO THE PRESENCE of GOD IN US AND AS US? What each of us is called to may look different, but from that deep well of Presence, from that flame of love that we ARE, we each in our own way heed the call. It is time now. The kin-dom of heaven is here. We are the hands and hearts and voice of Love at work in the world.

“Brigid of Ireland, Rekindle in us the Flame of mercy, justice, strength, gentleness, compassion, hospitality and wisdom.”

And so it is. Amen.