

CELTIC EVENING PRAYER

for

BELTANE



We light this candle, because Christ is the Light no darkness can extinguish



In the name of the Holy Father
In the name of the Victor Son
In the name of the Praying Spirit
In the name of the Three-in-One

OPENING PRAISE

God of winter's cold, of clear sky and frozen river:

We praise your Holy Name

God of spring's warmth, April showers, waking life:

We praise your Holy Name

God of summer sun, warming earth, sprouting seed:

We praise your Holy Name

God of root and shoot, of harvest to come

We praise your Holy Name

Lord, through your power, all things were made; through your wisdom, all things are governed. Through your grace, all things are sustained. Give us power to serve you, wisdom to discern your laws and grace to obey them always. **Amen.**

WE ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

**Creator God, forgive our moments of ingratitude –
the spiritual blindness that prevents us
from appreciating the wonder that is this world;
the endless cycle of nature –
of life and death and rebirth.**

**Forgive us for taking without giving,
reaping without sowing.**

Open our eyes to see, our lips to praise and our hands to share.

**May our feet tread lightly on the path we walk
and our footsteps be worthy of following,
for they lead to you.**

Amen.

‘Sow everywhere the good seed given to you. Sow in good ground, sow in sand, sow among the stones, sow on the road, sow among the weeds. Perhaps some of these seeds will open up and grow and bring forth fruit, even if not at once.’

(Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) Russian monk)

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 19 : 1-9

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth: their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,

like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

THE SEASON OF BELTANE



The ancient Celts were a pastoral people, completely dependent on the land and their livestock. They based their understanding of the year around the solstices and equinoxes, the year being divided into the seasons of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasa.

Beltane, commencing on the eve of April 30th / dawn of 1st May, saw the livestock being driven out to summer pasture. Rituals were performed that were thought to protect crops, livestock and people and promote reproduction and new growth. Fires were lit to encourage the sun to nurture the emerging future harvest. Following what were often harsh winters, Beltane heralded a time of great merrymaking, as the summer was welcomed in. Such celebrations survive today in various May Day traditions, including dancing around the Maypole and the Padstow ‘Obby Oss’ Festival - thought to be one of the oldest fertility rites in the British Isles.

The Celtic saints, who brought Christianity to these lands, understood their mission as fulfilling, not destroying what already existed. The Celts worshipped Christ through the lens of their own culture. It was a culture deeply rooted in nature, which is reflected in Celtic Christian expression today. Pagan worship of the sun or the earth became worship of the Living God, their Creator.

St. Columbanus said, ‘If you want to know the Creator, know his Creation’. May is particularly conducive to the contemplation of both the magnificence of God’s artistry and the symbolism underlying the season : seeds and plants that have lain dormant in the cold earth spring forth, blossoms decorate the landscape and green – the colour of new life and growth – is once more everywhere in evidence. A few weeks ago, we commemorated the Passion and death of Jesus. Like a dormant seed, he lay in the cold tomb and like the buds, flowers and trees in May, he burst forth on Easter Day, offering the hope of new life and joy!

REFLECTION

Lord, purge our eyes to see
within the seed a tree,
within the glowing egg, a bird,
within the shroud, a butterfly
till, taught by such, we see
beyond all creatures, Thee.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)



Let's spend a moment or two in stillness. Consider winter's chill, when the ground was hard, with seed and plant lying dormant, followed by the rising sun and warming air of Spring, green shoots emerging, leaves unfurling, blossom shouting its praise to the Creator. Let's reflect on the cyclical nature of life and death embedded in Creation and give thanks for God's promise of eternal life. Reflect on that time when the cycle will end and there *is* only **life**.

CANTICLE : *A Song of St Francis of Assisi*

The warmth of the sun's embrace,
the gentle breeze swept in by the incoming tide,
the rhythm of seasons; of new birth – death and recreation.
All these, Lord, speak so clearly of your love,
your power and your beauty.

All are expressions of your creativity, of yourself.
As an artist might share his personality within each
brushstroke,
so within the myriad colours of a dragonfly's wing,
you share the exuberance of your love.

That we can glimpse you within Creation is a beautiful
thought:

it tells us that you desire to be seen, to be found and
known.

Open our eyes, Lord and as we walk through this world,
feeling the wind and sunshine, seeing the majesty of Creation
unfold before our eyes, help us to see you. **Amen.**



**'We do not know God from his essence.
We know him rather from the grandeur of his creation
and from his providential care for all creatures'**

Maximus the Confessor (c580-662)

PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD

(Based on St Francis' Canticle of the Sun)

You are praised, O Lord, by our Brother, Sun, who brings the day and you bring light through him. May light be shed on those who inhabit darkness:

Lord, we pray for everyone suffering as a result of this pandemic : those who are ill, those facing death and those who love them. We remember people who are struggling financially and who fear for their future. Those who are living with abuse, made worse by their confinement. We bring to you all those people and situations that weigh heavily on our hearts

You are praised, O Lord, by our Sister, Moon, and the stars. In the heavens, you have made them bright, precious beautiful. May the nations of the earth, whom they look down upon each night, be blessed with your peace.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Brothers, Wind and Air, Cloud and Rain. Pour down your grace upon the leaders of the world that in the policies they institute, they seek justice for all humankind, for the earth and for the animals.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Sister, Water. Quench the thirst of the poor, the downtrodden and those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. We bring before you those whom we know to be in need of your healing and name them before you now ...

You are praised, O Lord, through our Brother, Fire, through whom you brighten the night. We pray eternal light for those who have died. For them, as you, may there be no night.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Sister and Mother, Earth, who feeds and nourishes us, whose beauty and diversity enriches our lives. You created her. Give us the will to care for her, as we were created to care for her.

Be praised, dear Lord, through those who forgive for love of you. O Lord, we praise and bless you and we give you thanks and with all of Creation, we serve you and pray to you with great humility in the name of your Son and our Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.



THE LORD'S PRAYER

(New Zealand Prayer Book)

Eternal Spirit

**Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever.**

Amen.

BLESSING

We bless you, God of seed and harvest
and we bless each other, that the beauty of this world
and the love that created it
might be expressed through our lives
and be a blessing to others, now and always.

Amen.

