

Gathering at St. Brigids Well in Derryra, Ballyduff, Co Kerry on the eve of St Brigid's Day at 5pm

Having met and parked near the nearby Cashen river we now approached the well slowly to the sound of a bodhrán.

One of us had placed beautiful lanterns and candles around the well and a St. Brigid's cross.

Twelve of us had gathered, and just before we started to walk we were reminded of the sacredness of the place we were about to enter...sacred for our ancestors who had also come here to pray and do the rounds.

Then encircling the well, we listened to Gamhain Molta Bríde and some of us joined in at times ,a haunting recording by Noirin Ni Riain.

Then we heard a little about Brigid herself, a woman of liminal time... on the boundaries, between pagan and Christian, born at sunrise as her mother crossed the threshold, daughter of a slave and chief, a woman who reached out to those on the margins, building a monastery for both women and men, who loved creation and needed solitude and contemplation.

Mary who had written a book ** about wells in North Kerry told us a little of this particular well, Tobar a'Leighis, situated beside the roadside beside an existing rath, giving the townland its name 'Doire Rátha Beag'. Then we listened to the legend of Brigid's cloak or brath, while someone cut strips for each of us to take home (to leave out overnight to take in the dew and then use during the year ...said to have healing properties).(See the green hessian cloth on the ground in the photo).

Then it was time for a little sacred movement or dance '*The Pilgrim Walk*', which was a simple way to come into the peace and tranquillity of the place on the roadside near the statue of Brigid, to sense the strength of others as we moved...to be carried and without any need for perfection or competition. This included a lovely movement of gathering the water....and then we did just that.

One of us bent down near the well and carefully filled all our jars....something to take home and to scatter north, south, east and west.

Finally , we thought about the bees....who sadly are in trouble...and recognising that Brigid was possibly a bee keeper, each person received a packet of wildflower seeds collected in Kerry by Niamh Ni Dhúill, and a page about helping the bees in our gardens from the publication ' Gardens' part of the 'All-Ireland Pollinator Plan' (www.biodiversityireland.ie/pollinatorplan)

It was time for our closing prayer: a Prayer to St. Brigid and part of a 'Prayer for our Earth' from Laudato Si'.

And then a walk, for some, back to our cars in the light of the beautiful crescent moon and Venus.

Sylvia Thompson