



August 1, 2021

Mercy by the Sea Prayer Circle

We invite you to prepare a sacred space to celebrate the Celtic Festival of Lughnasadh. You might consider including a colorful cloth, candle, flowers and some of the first fruits of this season, such as blueberries, wheat, or corn.

Lughnasadh (also known as Lammas) opens the last quarter of the Celtic year. This festival marks a deeper awareness of the marriage between the land and its people.

July was called “the hungry month” because people often faced famine, having run through their supplies since the previous harvest. It was for this reason that they looked forward so keenly to Lughnasadh for, as the saying went, “tomorrow is Lughnasadh Day when all fruits ripen.”

Lughnasadh celebrates the beginning of the harvest season, the ripening of first fruits, and was traditionally a time of community gatherings, market festivals, horse races and reunions with distant family and friends. On mainland Europe and in Ireland many people continue to celebrate the holiday with bonfires and dancing.

The Christian church established the ritual of blessing the fields on this day and in some English-speaking countries in the Northern Hemisphere, August 1st is Lammas Day (loaf-mass day), the festival of the first wheat harvest of the year. On this day, it was customary to bring to church a loaf made from the new crop.

Today, our neighbors and many around the world are hungry. Many members of our community suffer disproportionately through systemic racism that degrades economic justice, access to healthcare, education and affordable housing. For them, July, and every month, is the hungry month. How might we bring the spirit and bounty of Lughnasadh to the global table this August?

We share these prayers and reflection materials knowing that others join with us in prayer and song and with the hope of engaging together in a new way of being.

[Resources include: faithandworship.com/Lughnasa *The Celtic Book of Days: A Guide to Celtic Spirituality & Wisdom*, Caitlin Matthews, Destiny Books, Rochester, 1995, pgs. 97-99; *Four Elements: Reflections on Nature*, Joh O'Donoghue, Harmony Books, New York, 2010]

Opening Prayer

For everything that emerges from the earth
thanks be to you, O God,
Holy Root of being
Sacred Sap that rises
Full-bodied Fragrance of earth's unfolding form.
May we know that we are of You
may we know that we are in You
may we know that we are one with You
together one.
Guide us as nations to what is deepest
open us as peoples to what is first
lead us as a world to what is dearest
that we may know the holiness of wholeness
that we may learn the strength of humility
that together we may live close to the earth
and grow in grounded glory.

—*Praying with the Earth* by John Philip Newell, 2011 recorded on *Chanting for Peace*



Music

We Give Thanks by Jan Novotka

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUnOUoSl_yo

Reading 1

The Earth is the most ancient mother. She is the endless source and the inescapable destiny. Everything issues from her, ferries its life upon her for a while, and finally sinks back into her. All life-forms and especially the human being are expressions of the Earth. Human life is a shepherd of the clay, a custodian of sacred thresholds. Each plant, animal and human eventually returns to clay.

—*Four Elements: Reflections on Nature*, 2010 by John O' Donohue, p. 149

Music

"Sleep" by Cameron Newell <https://soundcloud.com/cameron-newell-3/part-v-sleep>

Reading 2

The Poet Visits the Museum of Fine Arts by Mary Oliver

For a long time
I was not even
in this world, yet
every summer

every rose
opened in perfect sweetness
and lived
in gracious repose,

in its own exotic fragrance,
in its huge willingness to give
something, from its small self,
to the entirety of the world.

I think of them, thousands upon thousands,
in many lands,
whenever summer came to them,
rising

out of the patience of patience,
to leaf and bud and look up

into the blue sky
or, with thanks,
into the rain
that would feed
their thirsty roots
latched into the earth –

sandy or hard, Vermont or Arabia,
what did it matter,
the answer was simply to rise
in joyfulness, all their days.

Have I found any better teaching?
Not ever, not yet.
Last week I saw my first Botticelli
and almost fainted,

And if I could I would paint (create) like that
but am shelved somewhere below with a few
songs
about roses: teachers, also, of the ways
toward thanks & praise.

Reflection

What are you hungering for this season?
What is coming to fruition in you at this time?
What can you bring to the communal table?

Intentions

For each of us who gather together in this prayer, may we remember that though we are separated by space, we are grounded on the same earth, rejoice in the same sunlight, and are fed by the same harvest, we pray.

For those who hunger – for food, for security, for comfort, for righteousness – that at the end of this hungry month we may find nourishment at the table together, we pray.

For those who have bounty – of food, of security, of comfort, of righteousness – that at this feast we may rejoice in gratitude for the gifts of the earth, and learn how to share our gifts where they are needed, we pray.

For our tired, hurting world, that through this hungry time we may reap the fruit of resilience, trusting that the harvest will come, we pray.

Please add any intentions of your own.....

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.

—From *Faith and Worship*

