

A Song at Imbolc - Moya Cannon

*Now at spring's wakening, short days are lengthening
and after St. Bridget's Day, I'll raise my sail.*

A blind man, on a stone bridge in Galway
or the road to Loughrea, felt the sun's rays
in his bones again and praised the sycamore and oak,
crops still drowsy in the seed, wheat, flax and oats.
His song rising, he praised Achill's eagle, Erne's hawk
and in beloved Mayo, young lambs, kids, foals,
and little babies turning towards birth.

Blind Raftery invoked Bridget, Ceres of the North,
born into slavery at Faughart, near Dundalk
to an Irish chieftain and a foreign slave.

Why, of all small girls in so distant a century born
is she honoured, still, in place-names, constant wells,
new rushes plaited to protect hearth, home and herd?

Bridget, goddess, druidess of oak, or saint— a girl
who gifted her father's sword to a beggar for bread,
we, who have wounded the engendering seas and earth,
beg you to teach us again, before it grows too late,
your neglected, painstaking arts of nurture and of care.



