



## Celtic Tradition in the Jubilee Year of Mercy

*“May mercy be my lip’s attire, may kindness to my face be lent,  
may chasteness be on my desire, may wisdom be in my intent.”* -Highland Prayer

On December 8, 2015, Pope Francis pushed open the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica formally launching the Holy Year of Mercy. He crossed the threshold of the sacred space on the day that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of Vatican Council II. Just as the council looked to renew the church into a dynamic Pilgrim People, Pope Francis is proclaiming that mercy is the key to the church’s renewal in this new phase of history. “We have to put mercy before judgment,” he added.

The purpose of Lent is to restore relationships. As we journey through this sacred season, we move where mercy takes us. On March 17, we observe the feast of St. Patrick and spend a little time with our Celtic ancestors. In that spirit, we join the Celts of yore—challenging us to live the Paschal Mystery in our ordinary daily lives. To the people of the Celtic world, our Creator God not only dwelled in the local church but in the family home which was the resting place in which to visit the hearts that were longing for him. God was there in the gloaming and the dawning of the day:

God was present as they kindled the fire in the hearth for the community gathered:

“God, kindle thou in my heart within  
A flame of love to my neighbor  
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,  
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,  
O Son of the loveliest Mary,  
From the lowliest thing that liveth,  
To the Name that is highest of all.”  
~ Carmina Gadelica

Celtic spirituality contains wonderful elements of joyful celebration. Kinship brings joy—whether it is within the tribe or family or with all the other creatures in the great circle of living beings. The Celts had a deep sense of enchantment with the beauty and mystery all around them.

Celtic Christianity is full of stories, images, holy wells, poetry, song, and prayer—of life, change and transition, joy and sorrow. This Jubilee of Mercy is an open invitation to soak ourselves in their ancient tradition—noticing the gates that are open to us wanderers, pilgrims and penitents.

“The blessing of God be upon you that good may come to you!  
The blessing of Christ be upon you that good be done to you!  
The blessing of the Holy Spirit be yours, that good be the course of your life,  
each day rising, each night lying down, for evermore.”  
~ Unknown