

A HISTORY AND VISION STATEMENT FOR CÉILE DÉ GROUPS

When I first found the Céili Dé¹ the only way one could learn the tradition was to commit to full profession... in other words, one had to become a monk². Part of my calling in this life, with the encouragement and blessing of my Anam Chara³, has been to create a structure of levels of involvement with the tradition, so that others could also work with its great power and beauty. This account is intended to be a kind of 'vision statement'. I hope to explain a little about my reasons for bringing the Tradition into the world, and also a little about how I personally came to realise this path was my Way Home. I will also say something about what we can expect when we enter into the Tradition and how it can change our lives.

Since the Céile Dé Groups structure began in 2004, the brief statement that has always accompanied any invitation to group membership and ongoing teachings has been this:-

"Whilst newcomers are welcome, continuing attendance will be for those who are willing and able to commit to the practices and teachings of the tradition."

Years later, this statement remains the very heart of what I am sharing with you in the following pages...

I first found the Céile Dé Tradition in the late 1980s. At that point I had already been a dedicated follower of a Celtic Spiritual path (a Gaelic Druidical tradition) for about ten years.

When I was a part of neo-Pagan Druidry, it became clear to me that there was little or no concept within that community (at least at that time, I cannot speak for today) of certain things that were rapidly emerging for me as vitally-needed features of my spiritual path. It seemed to me that this lack was also evident in most other religious institutions I had encountered, at least as they were offered to people in their mainstream versions. This included the so called "New Age" which, as I experienced it, was by and large replacing one set of identifications, with another albeit more fashionable or "alternative" set of identifications. In short, I had come across no Spiritual Path that contained all of the facets I wished for. Even though I didn't always know in those days exactly *what* I hungered for, I was in keen relationship to it by its lack...

I know now what I did not know then; that I was beginning to uncover the difference between 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' spiritual communities. There may be several different definitions out there of the term 'esoteric', so I will define it for our purposes as a spiritual path whose members are *not interested* in finding and adopting a set of beliefs or a certain lifestyle that enables them to inhabit the identity it provides for them, so that they can somehow feel more comfortable with themselves and life in general (but inevitably less comfortable with 'others' who hold a differing set of beliefs). A person who becomes drawn to the esoteric is more interested in 'piercing the veil' of the illusion that they typically already sense... and going through it, towards That Which Is Drawing Them, like a soul-magnet, towards the Ineffable. They have come to see that we are all imprisoned in some way by a limited consciousness and they feel the insistent call from within of a deeper, truer level of reality. In many esoteric traditions, such as our own, this ultimate reality is called God, whereas in many exoteric paths, God and what God wants from us is clearly defined *on our behalf*, right from the start; this effectively means there is nothing to seek - our journey is over as soon as we are baptised in our chosen path and have agreed to its dogma. Those who seek the certainty that the exoteric path provides will feel disturbed by any tradition with a strong esoteric flavour: by the same token, those who are called to 'wander in the desert' of answerless questions and seek God through personal experience that will change and grow with each year that passes as they dive ever deeper beyond the illusory, will by their very nature know in their bones that any path offering the security of a belief system that cannot be questioned is a kind of spiritual death. It was not until I discovered the Céile Dé tradition that I found everything I longed for in one place. This crucial mix includes :-

¹ Plural of Céile Dé.

² 'Monk' is a gender free word in the Céile Dé tradition. Men *and* women are called monks

³ Lit "Soul Friend". A teacher to someone who is following the tradition at the level of either Muinntir or Order.

- ⊕ A clear sense of the process of Inner Transformation.
- ⊕ Tools to help facilitate that inner growth.
- ⊕ A potential for service to the Whole (if only by one's own growth initiating an inevitable a knock-on effect).
- ⊕ A path that offers regular spiritual practices that serve objectives beyond consolation, escapism, feel-good factor or an interesting social life.
- ⊕ A path that stresses the gradual incarnation of spiritual consciousness through regular dedication to the practices taught; growing understanding of our own shadow-side; and palpable embodiment of the insights gained – enough to keep me living outside of my comfort (unconscious/habitual self) zone!
- ⊕ A closely-knit spiritual community that values qualities such as :-
 - Maturity
 - Freedom from unnecessary dogma
 - Discipline
 - Quality of being (presence)
 - *Gràdach ghoire*⁴ and the consequent safe harbour for the soul
- ⊕ A recognition that such *Gràdach ghoire* must be born not from the adoption of a set of ideas and behaviours but is, in its authentic form, the natural child of *Metanoia* – the Awakening of the Heart.
- ⊕ A tradition that respects Earth and the body as *a part of God*.
- ⊕ A tradition that receives Christ's teachings as the teachings of an awakened, fully-divinised being - and offers this state of consciousness as the birthright of 'Sons and Daughters of God'.

I have been teaching the Céile Dé tradition since the mid 1990s. At Samhain 2003, I finally surrendered to an insistent inner call and began a six-month retreat to prepare myself inwardly and give myself to fully serving the transmission of the tradition to others.

In 2004, I began giving introductory 'teaching retreats', (wishing to set the tradition apart from the current culture of spiritual materialism, I choose not to call them 'workshops') always clearly voicing my willingness to return and offer continuing teachings to those who felt able to commit in a dedicated way after tasting the tradition for a while. To become a part of a Céile Dé community has always meant to dare to become close to each other, to commit to meeting regularly, to fully assimilating the teachings, to doing the practices together and sharing essential experiences in an environment that is both safe for the emerging Soul and compassionately challenging to the False Self. Since the inception of such groups, the Céile Dé community has been growing steadily both outwardly and inwardly; initially in Scotland, but latterly also in England and in the USA. Today, many close and wonderful soul friendships have formed right across our Community and a real sense of dedicated eldership now lives at its core as many of the people who came to those early gatherings are now coming into their own as mature practitioners of the tradition. As in all spiritual paths however, the journey from 'there' to 'here' is a mixed bag of experience; but it is always interesting.....

When people first come to the Céile Dé – or indeed any esoteric tradition - they inevitably carry with them their own set of illusions, born out of their family culture and other beliefs adopted along the way. *We all*, to varying degrees, bring that baggage with us when we visit the Térmon⁵ for teachings. It is the true work of any spiritual tradition worth its salt to gradually and sometimes painfully bring each of us to an awareness of just how much excess baggage we are carrying and invite each of us to have the courage to lay it down. Anyone who wishes to be a part of the Céile Dé community must be willing to come with this aim alive within his or her heart. It is inevitable that a certain strain will sometimes be experienced within any community as we trip up over each other's lost baggage! The aim during these times is *Gràdach ghoire*.

⁴ The Celtic Christian equivalent of the Buddhist *Metta* – or "Loving Kindness"

⁵ Old Irish – A Céile Dé monastery. Part of the discipline of the group is to view the arrival at any gathering as a crossing over into the "Térmon space", where all of the values described in this booklet prevail.

Occasional sleep-born behaviour must surely be forgivable if the sleeper shows willing most of the time to keep awake⁶. We all fall over at times; the trick is not to stay lying down.

It takes real discernment to be able to perceive the difference between the inner struggle with the False Self that real growth necessitates and when a certain path is just not right for you. There will naturally be struggles as you walk the Céile Dé path; but it may become clear to some group members, if they have not felt at home for some time and that dis-ease is discerned to be more than just the inevitable challenge needed to grow inwardly, that it may be time to find another path better suited to their needs and temperament. Whatever way we take, it will hopefully one day begin to reveal to us the difference between what we want and what we need. But nothing will have been lost in the time anyone spends with the Céile Dé Tradition; even if we only walk the Way together for a short while, if the time ever comes to take another route, we will have benefited from our journey together.

Those of us who stay do so because we know we have come home. Like many in our community today, I know that this is *my Path*... and my heart is alive, full and singing every day with that knowledge. I feel truly called and complete in this work. I feel confident in the Truth of that calling because I fought it hard for years and it would not let me go, even when I tried very hard to escape! As soon as I gave myself fully to serving this tradition, the numinous visions, the incredible synchronicities as well as the faith-sustained stumblings and the severely testing times have become daily fare... Perhaps that *is* the "Life more abundant". I have earned every one of my grey hairs and however much of a Soul that has grown within me. The adventure never stops and is not for the faint or the *feint* hearted, so be certain that you want to taste it for a while... and if it feels right, consciously say "Yes" - and then give it your all.

I walk... through God towards God, because it is the most mysterious and yet the most intimate experience and invitation to my own authenticity there can be... I choose the Céile Dé path on that adventure because it sings the song of the land through which I travel and it does so with the voice of the enlightened ancestors - the Saints - whose prayers echo in my very marrow... I invite others to walk the talk along with me because, like most Human Beings, when I marvel at a great beauty, I want to say to my dear soul-friends, "oh... *look..!*" and when I look into their eyes I want, without exception, to see the Christ shining there.

Most simply put; my intention in forming Céile Dé Groups has always been to invite others who feel drawn to these same riches to join me. I hope this sharing of my vision for Céile Dé Groups, my aim as a teacher and my experiences as a walker along this way has been of help to you. Most of all, I hope that it has given some voice to your own inner hunger. If all of the above speaks to your heart you may be in the right place. I hope you are. I hope you too will find your home here.

Immanaire
(May it be for Good)
Sister Fionntulach



⁶ "Could you not keep awake with me for one hour?" – Matthew 26:40