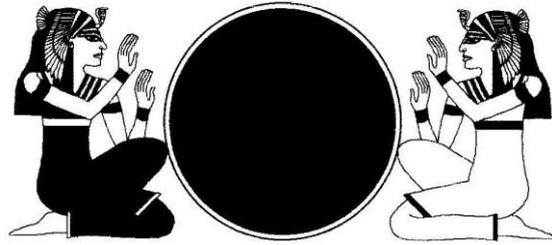


Temple of the Dark Moon



A Mid Winter Thought

(from the Temple of the Dark Moon)

An alternative name for the Mid Winter Solstice is Yule, taken from the Nordic word meaning wheel, and is usually celebrated in the Southern Hemisphere around 21 June, the Mid Winter Solstice. It marks a turning point of the year, when the tides turn and flow in the opposite direction. It is the darkest time of the year, the time of the longest night since the Sun God passed away at Samhain. With Winter setting in, bringing with it the rains, cold winds and even snow (depending where we live), we may feel that the returning light is a long way off but it is this promise that is celebrated.

In the Northern Hemisphere the symbolism of this festival is more apparent as the Winter Solstice falls on 21 December and it is around that time Christianity celebrates the birth of their own sacred Sun/Son, Jesus. The evergreen tree, especially the fir, is associated with this time of the year and was considered sacred to the Moon Goddess, Artemis, in ancient Greece, and in Phrygia the Goddess Cybele adorned a fir tree with violets in memory of her beloved Attis. This tree was also used in rites to bring about his resurrection.

Some Wytchcraft traditions perform two rituals are performed at this time, both are based on various aspects of the seasonal dance undertaken by the God and Goddess, known to us as the "Wheel of the Year". The first ritual acknowledges the Goddess who, like us, is waiting for the return of the Child of Promise, the Sun God, her son and lover. The Goddess is in her darkest aspect and during the night it is a good time to turn inward in deep contemplation of the warming months and what we hope will emerge. The second ritual begins at dawn to greet the rising Sun, the Divine Child, as it brings the promise of longer and warmer days.

The Mid Winter Solstice is an excellent time for us to be thankful of our gifts – whether they be a new birth, good health, a loving family, or a special talent. In today's society we are often told that acknowledging our special talents is a form of vanity. But these are gifts given to us by the Gods and they come in a variety of ways - whether we are good at algebra, consoling others, or making a batch of scones - and we should be proud of them. A small gift could be pledged to the God and Goddess as a way of thanks. Whether this is a small creative act or something connected with charity or the environment, it is something we should give with joy.

The Mid Winter Solstice is usually a quiet period in the year. We can make use of it by rekindling relationships with friends and family, sharing experiences or telling stories, as opposed to venturing out into the winter weather. Like with Samhain, it is a good time for learning divination skills and practising meditation.

Sources:

Dancing the Sacred Wheel: A Journey through the Southern Sabbats by Frances Billingham

Magick without Peers by Ariadne Rainbird and David Rankine

Wheel of the Year: Myth and Magic through the Seasons by Teresa Moorey and Jane Brideson

The Witches Bible by Janet and Stewart Farrar

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training having commenced in 1993. She has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wicca tradition, with interests also in ceremonial magick, the Qabalah and traditional Wytchcraft.

After founding the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999, Frances spent some six years as secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) where she worked closely with both the Police and Attorney General with respect to changes in legislation. She has led rituals with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm, and occult philosophy Ramsay Dukes, as well as presented lectures at various national and international events.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*.

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