

Letters



from Mom

Living in Goddess-less days



by Byron Ballard

As you know, I grew up here and I have often heard local preachers who were concerned about culture or the state of the nation say that we are living in "godless times". For many ancient European peoples and quite a few modern Pagans, the days between Samhain and the Winter Solstice are times when the gods are absent from the world of humans. Six weeks of ever-growing nights when anything could happen.

There might be a sense of panic in living in such a time but I think it's quite the opposite. Our mythology gives us this time out of time for a deep psychological reason built on a basic human need.

Why now? Why would our deities "abandon" us as the light seemingly fails? If you come from a different spiritual tradition or from a viewpoint that ancient people weren't very bright, you might conclude that they believed these things because their minds were too primitive to grasp more sophisticated concepts but I suggest another, more natural answer.



Yule - December 21

Nature and the gods give us this time to rest and renew.

We have concluded the round of the agricultural year and, if it has been a good or even adequate one, our pantries and storage bins are full. We've worked hard from spring through harvest and the harvest is recently completed, so there is plenty of food, plenty of firewood for warmth in the cold winds of November and December. Wild animals are still plentiful and fat from summer grazing, so if we have practiced good husbandry, there is less to do and there are stores to wait out the time of Imbolc/Bridnassadh.

It's the perfect time to rest our bodies for next year's season. Our modern culture doesn't get this, though. We are working harder and for longer hours at the very time nature has given us a grace period. But we fill it with all the madness of the biggest shopping and entertaining season of the year, with guilt and overindulgence and busyness.

Napping is the reason for the season, my dears. Let your animal body rejoice in its nature and replenish its energy and resources at this dark and perfect time. Take off a couple of those hats you're so anxious about wearing and live a little more today.

The Mystery of Winter



Star Bustamonte

Winter has always been one of the seasons that I find rather curious and mysterious. Most anything with sense goes to sleep or becomes dormant—bears, deciduous trees, other small furry and not so furry animals and most flowers and plants. Nature uses the winter season to rest and renew itself.

I remember asking my mother once, when I was very young, if she was sure the trees and flowers and robin red-breasts would return. She took the time to explain to me that winter was when many things went to sleep, (or went on vacation) so they could rest and get ready for the next year. I pondered that for some time before asking why they all didn't and why we didn't. Her answer: Some plants & animals are just silly, like us humans.

At the time, I probably arched an eyebrow at her declaration of the silliness of humans, but now... well, I can't help but wonder if she hadn't gotten the right of it. We humans, we just keep coming up with new ways to complicate our lives that cause us to scurry about doing increasingly mindless tasks. I frequently think we would all be better served if we took a little time off or at least a deep breath here and there.

As a child, the promise of winter to me meant snow. All the Christmas rigamarole was fine but it couldn't really compete with being able to make snow angels and snowmen. I must have had an internal alarm keyed to go off if it started snowing. I can remember waking up in the dead of night only to realize it was starting to snow. I would sit draped over the back of the sofa in front of the picture window and watch while nature blanketed everything with white. What looked dead and stripped bare became intriguing and compelling. The arrival of snow was a wondrous event.

I almost hated to mar the stark beauty by placing my little snowboot prints all over it. Almost. By the end of the day, it would look like an army of deranged elves had had a mad party all over the lawn. Complete with snow angels and snow statuary.

The thing I have never lost is that sense of wonder when it snows. And the quietude that follows. Snow is like a giant baffle wrapped all around the natural world. You can step outside after a good snowfall and it is akin to walking through a house where everyone else is asleep. And yet, there I am, awake and wondering while everything else is asleep. Maybe it's because I was born in the dead of winter, in a place far north.

Whatever the reason, winter has always held a special charm for me. Oh sure, I gripe and complain about the cold, the snow and dreariness after a time, like everyone else. (Don't lie, you know you do, too!) I think much of this *complainer-y* is due to the fact that we try to do too much. We have crafted a life where we must constantly be busy and *doing* things when instead we should be using the time to reflect, reorganize and reformulate what we might do in kinder and warmer weather.

So here's my advice: This winter, make a little extra time in your flurry of activities for some solitude or at least some reflection. And rest a bit. Show winter a little veneration and admiration. You'll probably live longer and the people who love you will appreciate it, and appreciate *you*.

The spiritual philosophy of the Mother Grove Temple is one of respect for, worship of, and communion with the Divine envisioned as Goddess. We believe that the form of energy we call Goddess encompasses the entirety of the Universe and includes the male principle, the female principle, and all other expressions of gender. We vision the Goddess as both a Divine unity and a multi-faceted expression of that unity, so that expressions of the Divine as Goddess can be both monotheistic and polytheistic.

Featured Goddess- Hestia



Imagine coming home to a warm house, a crackling fire, and the smell of cider and cookies. Inside our homes we are protected, sheltered, and comforted. And for us lucky ones, we

have a home that is filled with love, support, and safety. And if we are *really* lucky, we have a fireplace in the living room that draws us near, that entices us to call out and bring others closer to the heat. Who better to protect our winter home than Hestia, Goddess of hearth and home, keeper of the sacred flame. In Greek Mythology, she is the daughter of Titans Rhea and Kronos. Although Hestia's primary focus was the home, she was also the protector of communities. Her powers expanded outward from the home to include city halls, civic gatherings, and communal properties. In this sense, she was the goddess of places where people gathered.

A quiet keeper of the home, Hestia was also known for her hospitality. If a stranger came calling and seeking sanctuary, it was considered an offense against Hestia to turn the person away. Those who followed her were obligated to provide shelter and food to anyone truly in need.

This winter, let us emulate Goddess Hestia and welcome friends and family into our homes, give them hospitality, share our meals, and aid those in need with charitable offerings to local shelters and pantries.

As Hestia presides over the hearth, we thank her for providing a space to gather, to have a place at the center of our home to share warmth. And as we gather our loved ones around the fire to sing, roast marshmallows, play games, and laugh, we are surrounded by the center of what *is* life -- love and family.



Mother Grove Wish List

If you feel a desire to contribute but are a bit short on cash, we will joyfully welcome the following gifts when you arrive to enjoy a public ritual:

Copy paper
Printer ink
Office supplies
Children's craft supplies
Pantry donations
Altar decor
Ritual set up assistance
Ritual take down help
Ritual volunteers
Temple care volunteers

Places to go, things to do:

[Membership](#)

[December Solstice Traditions](#)

[Yule Coloring Pages](#)

[Harry Potter's Yule Ball](#)

[Santa Claus is Pagan Too](#)

[Yule Cooking](#)

What's happening...



Morning Devotionals
every Sunday at the
Temple

Drumming at 10

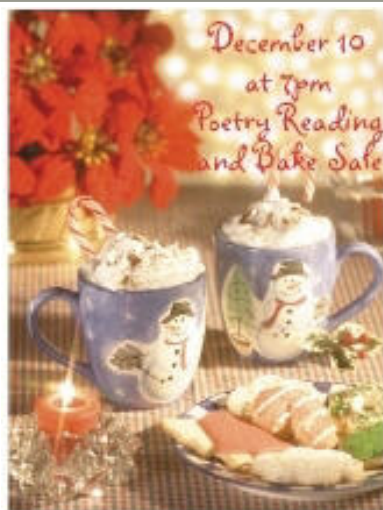
Service begins at 10:30

All are welcome.

Devotional Schedule

1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays
of each month we will be
there to offer space for a
quiet time of meditation.

The 2nd and 4th Sundays
of each month we will
hold a more structured
ritual service.



Various workshops and classes are held at the Mother Grove. Visit the [Events](#) page on our website for details.

We also post events, happenings and invites on our [Facebook](#) page! Join us!



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