



books★ gardening★ recipes★ ritual elements★ articles

Sword & Chalice

magazine of the Wiccan Church of Canada



Vol. 6 | #3

Imbolc



S. Equinox

Feb 1 – Mar 21, 2023

H A M I L T O N ★ T O R O N T O ★ W I N D S O R

The Wiccan Church of Canada

The Wiccan Church of Canada has offered open Wiccan temples facilitating classes, rituals, and training to the public since 1979.

Drawing on resources available in our own communities and temples, we are a diverse, accepting, caring group of people united by our love of the Gods and our own journeys. W.C.C. classes and rituals are open to one and all, regardless of one's level of experience in the Craft. We offer an open, and accepting place to worship as an experienced practitioner or someone who's vaguely curious, all are welcome. We encourage you to check out the F.A.Q section on our website or contact us if you have questions.

We hope our publication will reflect the diversity of our membership in offering a local pagan magazine written by the community for the community. Our articles are the voices of our community, those with knowledge and resources to share. Herbs and seasonal recipes we've tried and keep bringing back to our feast tables. We'll keep you abreast of pagan events, vendors and local artisans, as well as WCC classes & rituals.

Temples are open for Sabbat ritual and gatherings
watch local Temple FB for details

The WCC is pleased to offer free online weekly classes Tuesday 7pm - 9pm. As well as a social Meet & Greet every Wednesday night via the ZOOM conferencing app.

If you wish to participate, please email
LPH.WCC@gmail.com with your email address.





And so the wheel turns again, this time towards Imbolc, February 2. Let's take a look at where we are on the Wheel. Imbolc is between Yule, the Winter Solstice, and the Spring Equinox. It is a festival of the hearth and home, celebrating the lightening of days and preparation for the coming spring.

In the Celtic Traditions, we see two main figures, Brighid (Brede, Brigit) and the Cailleach. It is the celebration of the beginning of Spring, with fire and purification being important aspects of Brighid's festival. She was thought to visit households on Imbolc Eve and bless them. A special meal was often prepared where Brighid was the honoured guest, and a small bed laid for her by the fire. Custom has

it that before retiring the ash of the fire would be raked smooth so that in the morning a disturbance of the ash would be a sure sign that the Goddess was there. Often a white strip of fabric was hung outside on Imbolc eve. As the Goddess walked the land she would touch the cloth and bless it with healing properties. In the morning, the cloth was collected and kept someplace safe for use when needed.

Another Celtic tradition - The Cailleach - who is the Old Woman of Winter and at Imbolc she ventures out to collect wood for her hearthfire for the coming cold months. If she wants the winter to last a good while longer she will make sure the weather on Imbolc is bright and sunny, so she can gather plenty of firewood. However, if the weather on Imbolc is bad, it means that the Cailleach has slept in and winter is almost over.

The story of the Cailleach sounds a lot like a custom we have here in Canada – Groundhog Day!

There are many traditions to celebrate from around the world. In Greece, February is the month of Gamelion and brings with it the Festival of Arcadian Lykaia, a ritual of spring cleaning.

February was the month of purification to the Romans because in their early calendar it was the last month of the year, and so considered an appropriate time to get rid of the bad, stale, or unclean in preparation for the new year. February takes its name from the Latin februa, meaning "religious purification", and so means "the month of purification", or "the cleansing month", referring to the numerous festivals of that theme held at that time:

Juno Februtis would seem to be an aspect of Juno connected with the purificatory rites of February, and the fertility and creativity that can be had when the old is cleared out to make way for the new.

The Parentalia, or festival of the ancestors, was held from the 13-21 of February, and during this holiday offerings were given to the dead, especially on the Feralia on the 21st, when the dii manes, the divine and powerful dead, were propitiated.

In the Northern climates, Feb 2 is the Festival of Barri - A day we celebrate the wooing by Ingvi Freyr of the maiden Gerd, a symbolic marriage of the Vanir God of Fertility with the Mother Earth. It is a festival of fertility, the planted seed, and the plowed furrow.

In Canada, we are not so close to spring as they are in the Celtic lands. It is still too early for us to see the crocuses or snow drops popping up. But we do have uniquely Canadian signs at Imbolc. There is a visibly noticeable change to the amount of sunlight we are seeing on a daily basis and it is a time that the maple syrup sap flows.

We celebrate Imbolc with family and friends in our homes with joy at the return of warmth and the increasing power of the sun. We bring the purification aspect into play by cleansing our homes...a getting ready for spring. It is a great time to look towards the future with divination with all our hopes and dreams in mind and Imbolc gives us a season to watch nature soften, sharing omens of what is to come.

So, this Imbolc, celebrate and open yourself up to all possibilities. Cleanse away the old and look to what you will plant in the spring. And don't forget to add a little of our good Canadian maple syrup into the feast food you prepare.

Bellas' Book Nook



The daylight hours are slowly but surely getting longer, and there is a slightly different scent to the air. As it's been a weird winter, it's hard to figure out what is going to come next. In the countryside, things move slower, the snow hangs around longer, and the Nature's signs of more visible. Living in a city, as a pagan, can sometimes be challenging.

This brings me to a wonderful book, by Pagan Portals, entitled: **The (Inner City) Path - A simple pagan guide to Well-being and awareness, by Melusine Draco**.

Draco. Published by Moon Books, in 2020. ISBN: 978-1-78904-464-5, it's only 77 pages, includes a Bibliography and list of books for further reading. At Indigo, if ordered on-line, it's \$14.18 plus tax.

The Path in this context, does not refer to a path in term of Celtic, Norse, Eclectic, or any other specific path. The path refers to the walks we take, day in and day out. It is the path you take when walking the dog, or the path you take going to work, or the path you take when you go for an evening constitutional. The path is that daily route that takes you outdoors, to the places where nature resides.

The purpose of this book is to reconnect you with nature, and that it is important to take time, and get away from the distractions of modern living. It is about noticing the feathers on a bird as it sits on a bird feeder picking at seeds or noticing that the buds on the crab-apple trees are about to burst open with flowers in the lightest of pinks, or the darkest of reds and ever hue in-between.

There are seasonal exercises to help you notice what is changing around you and how you can spiritually attune yourself to all the changes going on around you. It's not just about seeing different plants grow or the snow melt; it's, about using your 5 senses and hearing the different birds, touching the fresh green leaves, smelling the changes in the air, and tasting the changes as they occur. There are recipes included in case you are a forager.

I really enjoyed reading the many descriptive passages through out the book, and I bet if I strung them all together, I'd have one heck of a guided meditation.

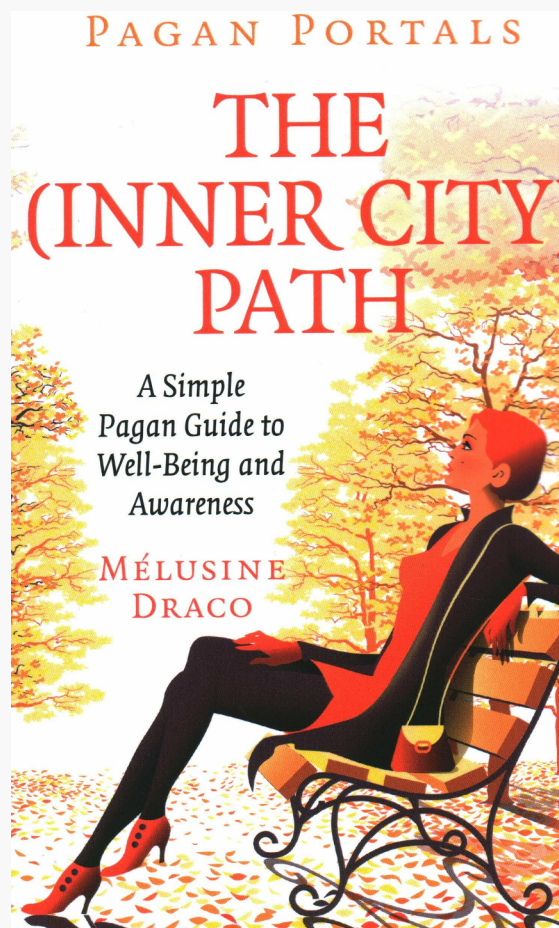
If your interested also check out Melusine Draco's Book – Traditional Witchcraft for Urban Living.

ISBN: 978-1-84694-978-4, also available at Indigo Books for \$22.00 plus tax.

So, until next time, stay well, stay safe and enjoy the fact that the daylight hours are starting longer.

Happy Reading

Bella



The (Inner City) Path - A simple pagan guide to Well-being and awareness, by Melusine Draco.

Published by Moon Book

ISBN: 978-1-78904-464-5

Dandelion

Herb Lore with Glenys

Imbolg also known as Imbolc or Oimealc is the Irish Sabbat celebrating new life, transitioning from the longest night to the first hint of lengthening days. It's a time to look for the greening of the land and the first hints of the arrival of spring. It's also the Sacred Day of the Goddess/Saint Brigid.

One of the plants/flowers associated with Brigid and the first signs of Spring in Ireland is the dandelion

(*Taraxacum* sp.) Dandelions are a member of the Asteraceae family (asters, daisies). The *Taraxacum* genus is so large that there it has its own term for the scientific study and hobby which is known as taraxacology. The two most common species in the world are *T. officinale* (common dandelion) and *T. erythrospermum* (red-seeded dandelion). The common name dandelion comes from the Latin *Dens Leonis* or French *dent-de-leon* meaning lion's teeth because of the shape of the leaves. Other folk names include blowball, Cankerwort, Piss-a-bed, Priest's crown, puffball, Swine snout, white endive and wild endive

The dandelion originated in the northern climes of Europe and were introduced from there. They now are common throughout the temperate world. The *Taraxacum* species have tap-roots with green notched smooth leaves forming a rosette. The flowers come from the centre on unbranched and leafless hollow stems which ooze a milky sap/latex when broken. The flowers are yellow to orange coloured which open during the day and close at night. The flowers are an important and early pollen source for bees and other pollinators. Dandelion flowers give way to seeded heads that resemble puff balls. The seeds are then carried on the wind.

The two common species are edible in their entirety. The young leaves make an excellent, although slightly bitter, addition to your salad. They contain high amounts of vitamins A, C and K (potassium). The leaves can also be cooked similar to spinach. The flowers are used to make dandelion wine and the taproots can be roasted and ground to make a coffee alternative. You can also use the leaves, roots and/or flowers in a tisane. The yellow flowers can be useful to obtain a yellow dye

Dandelion sap was often taken in milk as a spring tonic. The root has been used to cleanse the liver and gallbladder while the leaves act as a diuretic, increasing urine and aiding in kidney function. It is said to help in lowering blood pressure. Dandelion leaves can also aid in digestive issues. Some studies show promise in blood sugar management and reduction of inflammation. It has been said that the latex is useful in removing warts

Magically, dandelions are masculine, associate with Jupiter and the Sun and the element of air. In Ireland the bright yellow flowers are said to be a reminder of Brigid's fire representative of her aspects at the forge or St Brigid as protector of hearth and home. The bright flowers can be used in rituals related to happiness and prosperity. Any part of the dandelion can be used in rituals of related to healing, another aspect of the goddess Brigid. There are many instances of the dandelion being used in divination but most common ones relate to the seeded heads when blown. In Greek mythology there is a myth involving Theseus, Hecate and the dandelion and so there is some indication the dandelion is also sacred to Hecate. This makes sense especially with regard to the seeded heads and divination.



Malachite

It's said that a piece of malachite when worn will break to alert the wearer of impending doom or dangerous peril. The ancient Greeks used malachite to create amulets of protection for children, hanging a stone from an infant's cradle or bed, keeping all bad spirits away while the child slept peacefully and soundly. During the Middle Ages it was used to defend against baneful magic. In parts of Italy it was worn to protect the wearer from the spell of the Evil Eye. They would also grind and pulverize it into a fine powder to be worn as a luxurious eye shadow, not only for vanity, but it was also believed to stimulate clear vision and insight.

The colour green (wadj) was associated with death and the power of resurrection as well as new life and fertility. Ancient Egyptians believed that the afterlife contained an eternal paradise, referred to as the 'Field of Malachite', which resembled their lives but with no pain or suffering. In Switzerland and the French Alps, Malachite crosses were thought to bring good luck to pregnant women and mothers of large families. It is one of the stones dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. Legend claims that Malachite held in the hand or worn as a jewel would enable one to understand the language of animals and open communication with them. In more modern day, the base of the FIFA World Cup Trophy has two layers of malachite.

Element:Earth

Energy:Receptive

Planet:Venus

Chakra:Heart

Zodiac:Scorpio

Tarot:Judgement



Magical Properties: Abundance, Balance, Business Success, Connections, Emotional Empowerment, Goals, Grounding, Guidance, Healing, Hope, Love, Loyalty, Luck, Money, Nurture, Peace, Power, Prosperity, Protection, Psychic Ability, Release, Security, Self-Worth, Spirituality, Strength, Travel, Wealth

Magical Uses

Wear it, hold it, or place it on your altar to enhance energy during magical rites, increasing your ability to send power towards your goal. It is worn to guard against baneful magic, negativity and physical dangers, and is exceptionally useful in protective work involving children. When meditating, Malachite will help reveal the truth about oneself and brings to light that which is unknown, helping draw out whatever it is that is impeding spiritual growth. It helps balance and release the negative debris that was revealed. You can hold the crystal to help break negative patterns of behaviours, speaking your fears and sorrows aloud daily, then placing it in a sheltered place outdoors overnight to carry away those fears.

Healing Uses

Holding a piece of malachite in your receptive hand will help relax your nervous system, promoting a soothing, peaceful feeling, calming stormy emotions, and helps to dispel depression. It helps relieve cold sweats, helps with asthma, intestinal problems, kidney and gallstones, osteoarthritis, and strengthens memory. It is known to lower blood pressure, helps to treat epilepsy, travel sickness and vertigo. It helps in the healing of fractures, swollen joints, growths, tumors, torn muscles, and broken bones. It helps enhance the immune system and stimulates the liver to release toxins.

We would use or wear Malachite at this time of transformation and rebirth of the new season ahead. This is the time we start to plan our gardens for the warmer months to come. It will help us banish the winter blues and depression, leading us to a renewed hope as the Sun strengthens its force, warming our hearts and our beloved Earth.

ETHEREAL DREAMS TAROT

By David Bolt & Digital Desires

The premise behind this deck is celebrating the shared history of playing cards and the Tarot. What we wound up with was a Tarot deck wanting to be an Oracle deck.

Playing cards have been around almost as long as Tarot cards, with its origins just as mysterious. The biggest comparison is the Minor Arcanum of the Tarot. Except the Tarot has Pages, and a playing deck has joker(s).



While playing cards are usually just for playing games, some traditions will use them for divination as well. The Middle Ages use playing cards for divination with the following attributes:

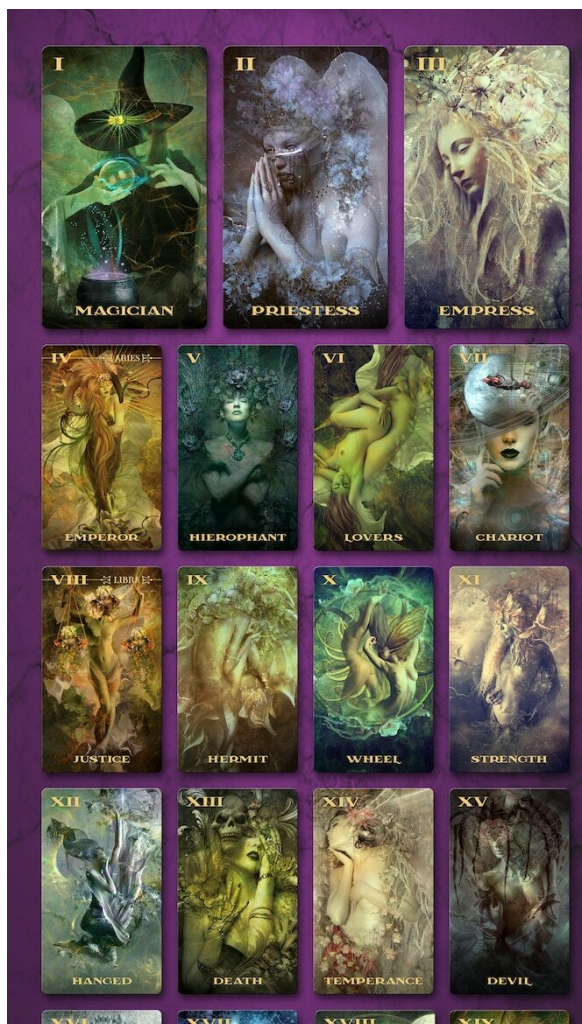
- 13 cards in a suit represented the weeks in a season
- 4 suits represented the season and elements
- The court cards represented people: hearts for the church, spades were military men, club were people connected to agriculture, and diamonds to merchants.

This being a Kickstarter campaign, there were several versions of both the Tarot and playing cards. The regular version came in flip top box, quality stock cards made for everyday use. The luxury version come with a quality stock, coating, and gilded edges. Comes is a sturdy wrap around magnetic box.

The artwork is done by the artist, Digital Desires. There is lush symbolism that connects a feminine domain of consciousness and imagination. And this where things drift from Tarot to Oracle. While some cards connect very well to traditional Tarot meanings, a lot don't. Another departure, playing cards suits are used instead of traditional Tarot suits. As well, some cards have seasonal and astrological correspondence. After doing some work the cards, I found myself treating it more like

ON DECK with Trelew

an Oracle deck than a Tarot. The interpretations for certain cards are just too much a stretch to meet traditional meanings. That being said, I do find it a wonderful deck that strokes the intuition well enough to do readings and workings with.



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DREAMING THE GODDESS

An Anthology

Edited by Karen Dales

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retellings, between these pages, you
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stories destined to become new
mythology.

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DREAMING THE GOD: AN ANTHOLOGY

Will be open for submissions from September 1, 2022 - March 31, 2022

DREAMING THE GOD will be a collection of short stories between 2,500 and 20,000 words. Each story must have a Pagan, Heathen, Occult influence that has a spark of truth in regards to the connection with the masculine aspect of the divine. We are looking for stories that speak to the spiritual soul. It doesn't matter in which aspect the Divine Masculine is portrayed—Son, Father, Horned One, Green Man, Hunter, Warrior, Gender Fluid, etc., are all welcome. Uplifting stories, inspirational stories, dark tales, and fantastic, written with truth or complete fantasy are all welcome. We are open and inclusive to LGBTQ2+ stories that meet the parameters of our main theme - the Divine Masculine in all His aspects, which we believe includes LGBTQ2+ experiences. The main aspect is to exhibit, in both fiction and nonfiction stories, the great breadth of how the Divine Masculine is portrayed across cultures and across interpersonal experiences.

We welcome new authors and well-experienced authors.

Another goal of this anthology is to educate readers about the Divine Masculine, so including mythology, culture, politics, paganism, heathenism, Wicca, Witchcraft, geography, etc., is important to the plot. If you pique your reader's interest and get them to look up references to learn more about the Divine Masculine, you've done your job. The idea is for your reader to not only be entertained but also to walk away from your story a little wiser and open than they were before.

EDITOR BIO: Karen Dales is the Managing Editor of Dark Dragon Publishing. She lives in Toronto with her husband, son, and five cats. When she is not writing or editing, she and her husband run the Toronto Pagan Pub Moot (c. Feb 1996). She is also the author of the highly acclaimed and best-selling series, The Chosen Chronicles.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Please do not query before submitting.
- Email all submissions to submissions@darkdragonpublishing.com
- To ensure your submission does not get deleted please place in the subject line Anthology Submission – (Title of Story) and (Your Name)
- Please do not describe or summarize the story in the email.
- Follow William Shunn's manuscript format: <https://www.shunn.net/format/story.html> Any variance away from this format will mean an automatic rejection.
- Keep your stories between 2,500 to 20,000 words.
- Above your manuscript, please include the following: Your full, legal name; your address; your email address; the title of the story; and the word count of the story.
- The stories needs to have an element of truth, whether that is from a personal, mythological, historical, cultural, geographical or political aspect.
- No reprints. Original stories only.
- Payment: Unfortunately, we are unable to provide a one time, up front fee for your story. We will be offering a royalty percentage to those who are selected for the anthology.

If you have further questions about the anthology please contact editor@darkdragonpublishing.com



Rosemary and Current Oatcakes

Oatcakes or Bannocks were traditionally eaten on old-world feast days to mark the changing seasons. And roundabout Feb 1st or 2nd, they were known as “Bannoch of Bride” in honour of St. Bridget or Brìghde. This goddess (and later saint) of Ireland, Scotland & the Isle of Man, returns to the earth on the eve of her feast day, also known as Imbolc, to herald the arrival of spring.

And to honour the occasion bonnach (bannocks in Scotland) were baked and left out in the hope she would leave her blessings of fertility, prosperity, and good health in return. All things bannock, oatmeal bread was once a staple of the everyday diet, but during festival and feast days it was often dressed up with seeds, berries, herbs and honey. Recipes varied according to the region and period, but the earliest bannocks were dense, flat cakes of unleavened oatmeal dough, formed into a round or oval shape, then baked.

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a cast iron skillet or baking sheet.
2. Place the oats, flour, salt, sugar, rosemary and orange zest in a large bowl, mix together with a fork. Cut the cold butter into the flour mixture. Stir in the cream until all the flour is absorbed.
3. Gather the rough dough together and place on a surface lightly dusted with oat flour. Knead until the dough holds its consistency (but don't overwork).
4. Divide the dough in half and roll out each half into a circle about 1/4 inch thick.
5. In small jar, vigorously mix your egg yolk with a tablespoon of cream. Then brush the mixture over the top of the bannock. Sprinkle with sugar.
6. Cut each circle into 4 wedges and arrange the wedges 1/4 inch apart on the baking sheet.
7. Bake about 20 minutes or until golden and crisping at the edges.

Note: you can also apply a second brushing of caudle and sugar halfway through baking – I did!

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup oat flour
- 1 cup currents
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled
- 1/2 cup cream or milk (plus one extra tablespoon for the caudle)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh rosemary (1 tablespoon dried)
- 1 tsp. of grated orange zest (optional)
- 3 tablespoons of sugar (and three more tablespoons for sprinkling)
- 1 egg yolk



Community Happenings

Toronto Pagan Pub Moot

"It is an open and friendly social event that meets in person every Third Calendar Monday of every month and virtually every Fourth Calendar Monday of every month. It is open to Pagans, Wiccans, Witches, Druids, Asatru, etc of ALL ages and those who are new and would like to learn more, to those who have been walking the path for decades."

TPPM dates 2023

Wiccan Church of Canadas Wednesday Meet & Greet

WCC Online COMMUNITY GET TOGETHER
7pm-8pm every Wednesday.

As with all WCC public events, there is no cost to participate.

The format is open and relaxed. We might discuss things like what people did to celebrate last Saturday's dark of the moon, or other magical happenings in our community. Books. Crystals. If it's pagan, we talk about it. You do not need to have your video on if you don't feel like being seen. Several of us do that. But we welcome and encourage everyone to participate in the conversation.

The link/password for these sessions (and the weekend classes) are e-mailed to registered participants before each meeting.

To register, please send an e-mail to our priesthood, at LPH.WCC@gmail.com. This e-mail will not be used for any other purpose then to offer you the meeting link. We respect your privacy.



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FORESCOPES

by Lady Iris

Imbolc arrives on February 3 at the halfway point between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. Occurring just before the New Moon in Leo on February 5th, this Imbolc has us all gestating new ideas and dreams through the winter months in preparation for action come spring. Once the Full Moon is upon us, let your light shine bright, even if it is only to illuminate your own inner thoughts and intentions. This is the time to make your plans and schedule the work needed to make step-by-step progress toward launching new aspirations in March. Supporting this will be Mercury entering Aquarius on February 11th, when your universal dreams may begin to coalesce if you are willing to share the journey with others. Let people know what you are up to – you may be surprised at the amount of assistance others are willing to bring to a community table. During this entire time period, from Imbolc to Spring Equinox, there are no planets in retrograde, so it is full steam ahead for your endeavours. When the Sun cycles into Pisces on February 18th, with the Moon in Aquarius, there is a chance for change when you go deep to plumb your desires then surface with cosmic wisdom in a positive emotional flow. By the New Moon in Pisces on February 20th Venus moves into Aries to have you confidently surfing new energies with an opening

available to explore new aspects of feeling from an independent perspective.

Into March the flow continues toward the Full Moon in Virgo on March 7th, where if you don't have yourself in order, there will be an extra push to prepare yourself for the next chapter your dreams have indicated over the previous month. Did you listen to yourself or are you preferring to stay in the same old, same old. In case there was any doubt, now is the time to spruce up your timeline by scheduling the work you need to do between much-needed self care activities. On March 16 Venus moves into Taurus where she advises us all to ground the necessary work in our hearts and germinate the seeds of what we want to plant and eat this year. Mercury joins her in Taurus on the 19th, just before the Equinox to ensure you have the inspiration to communicate your worth and get ready to sow your ideas for future harvests. The Equinox arrives on March 20th, a day before the New Moon in Aries. This is your last chance to really have your intentions clarified before the Spring urge to grow and expand truly fills your sails with the wind to push you into destined action. All the old has been washed away at a cosmic level and there is so much potential awaiting you ahead. Only you can make it happen in the real world

IMBOLC TO SPRING EQUINOX 2023

ARIES: This time kicks you into a new gear so keep your wits and watch those ram horns. Not everyone understands your single-minded pursuits, so take the time to explain your motivations to those you care about. Relationships are important but should not stand in the way of your personal goals.

TAURUS: Expect some surprises later in January as what you thought would never budge from your burdens finally starts to gain some traction. It takes one step to start a journey and one action to move toward a goal, just keep taking more steps and actions and you will get there.

GEMINI: The fire in your belly has been burning up your fuel as you seek the best place to light the fires for others to warm themselves by. Expect a lucky Friday the 13th, as the critical mass you seek in friends and forward amusement starts to ascend to the next level.

CANCER: Your feeling of being on the edge of saying what you really mean will ease in this time as you let down your shields enough for someone to see your inner glow. Open to the idea others are actually interested in what you've been hiding away to yourself.

LEO: No matter what you do, or where you go, you are still there. Is it possible there are personal triumphs you are avoiding as you busy yourself with where you would rather be than here? Take a look in the mirror to find your own limitations and make a deal with yourself to exceed them.

VIRGO: On the surface you may appear calm and collected, yet underneath you may be swirling with ideas and formulas for how to make your life, and by extension those around you, so much better. It takes a deep dive into inspirational purpose and shared vision to succeed.

LIBRA: As much as you may miss your people, sometimes isolation and being the hermit offers the time to weigh your options. There is no need to follow the pack when you would rather be going another direction. It's time to choose whether you are a leader or just in the parade.

SCORPIO: For someone with your passion, it can be challenging to keep the cat in the bag. Your ideas are often revolutionary and could really do some good, if you would only let other's pet your intuitions instead of scratching and biting your way to solitude. Surprise yourself and share.

SAGITTARIUS: Can I get a "blessed be" for your fine ability to hold it together when everyone else seems to be falling apart. Or, wait, is that you? Hunt up some companions to support your talent for knowing what to do and how to do it when. Be open to their input for mutual success.

CAPRICORN: Busy, busy, up the mountain goat, there's a tsunami coming. Well, as solid as you are with your footing, you still ride the depths just fine. Be willing to extend your skills to others and give them a hand up. Be magnanimous in your relations, you have the energy to spare.

AQUARIUS: In this transformative age, how is it you manage to stay the same? Your roots in the cosmos and transcendental tendencies are all well and good for the long term, but don't forget sharp pivots of perception and chance coincidences bear rich bounty if you can bend to reach them.

PISCES: The river has been flowing right at you for a while. Maybe it is time to actually hop on a surf board and ride the incoming abundance. Just remember while you may be in the shallows, the emotional tide coming your way is from a much deeper place. Have respect for the flow.

LOCAL RESOURCES

HAMILTON

Obskurah Bazaar

Candles, Tarot & Oracle decks, magical curios, ritual supplies, spiritual self-care items, herbs, books, incense and occult inspired accessories are available online or at our retail shop in Hamilton, Ontario. Our goal is to provide ethically sourced, sustainably made, fair trade and ecofriendly products that support fair wages and working conditions for the makers and honor their traditions.

Treasures for the Soul

We offer a variety of New Age, Self Help and Metaphysical Products and Services to aid in your journey of Spiritual Development. You can find many products ranging from spell kits and ritual supplies to herbs, oils, candles, divination tools, magical items, home decor, books and much more

Madame Phoenix Esoterica

Madame Phoenix produces hand made, top quality spiritual and occult supplies using only the highest quality, all natural ingredients from beginning to end.

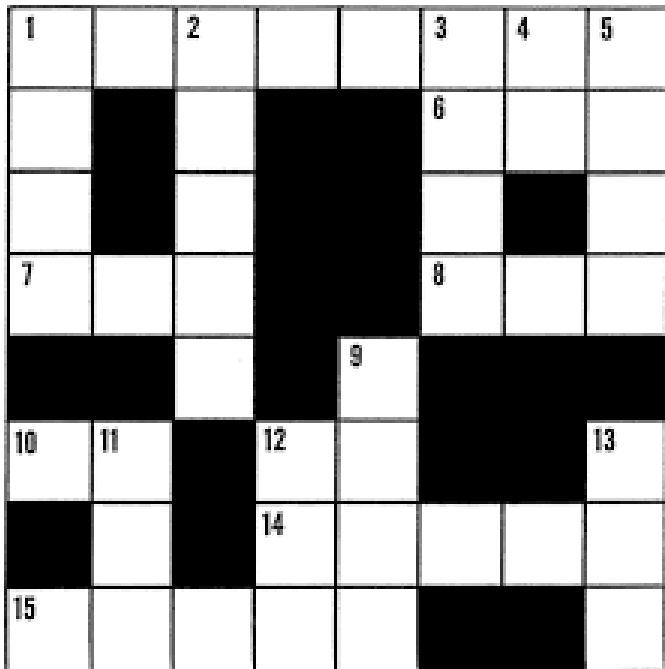
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Jaye Marsh offers Classical, Rock and everything in between compiled for your pagan moods.



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Sacrifice



By Ross Carter

Sacrifice is a word that has been used, abused and misused as much as any other word that is used in a religious context. But what does it mean?

Simply put, it means “to make sacred|. But how do we make something sacred, especially when it is something that we take for granted, perhaps such as life itself? Do we seek to find sacredness in the mundane and to bring it forward? Do we create sacredness by purifying and consecrating an object? Or do we choose to believe that only divinity can make sacred an act or an object that is not already so? Even then, once something is determined to be sacred, how can it be used as a sacrifice?

In everyday life, sacrifice can take many forms, such as the single parent who chooses to go without a meal so that their children won't have to, or the person who attends to the same job that they hate day after day in order to ensure that they are able to provide for their loved ones.

People who chose to battle addictions will go through tremendous amounts of pain , frustration and anguish, and do so often with the knowledge that their chances of success may be slim. However, if they are successful, the rewards can be worth the suffering. If.

We all make sacrifices of one fashion or another but is the concept of sacrifice that we adhere to in the mundane world the same as in the spiritual or religious sense?

In 1982, I began a personal study into the concept of sacrifice after reading a novel about the fall of the Aztec empire. Although the novel itself was a work of historical fiction, it was nonetheless well researched and was the result of a decade's worth of said research by the author. (To put things in perspective, there was no internet or Google back then so research actually involved searching for source material, reading it, comparing it to other source materials and forming one's own conclusions, and then



doing it all again to confirm your conclusions, etc.)

The book was well written in its presentation of a portrait of the daily life of the Aztecs and produced imagery that was both vivid and disturbing. As I read on, I became aware that this was a culture whose entire existence seemed to be based on the concept of sacrifice. From the first words of a midwife to a newborn Aztec which can be roughly translated as “You were born to be a servant of the Gods. Your foremost duty to them is to do their will that you may one day be as one with them”, to the last beat of a Aztec warrior’s heart upon the sacrificial altar. The author related tales of every ritual and festival of the Aztecs, each and every one involving the loss of life in a ritual sacrifice.

My thought as I read through its nearly one thousand pages was, “what the hell were they thinking?”

After searching for, and finding more information about the author which included the titles and authors of much of their source materials, I began my own study into Aztec culture with a particular focus towards sacrifice. I figured that if it took him a decade to research, my own research should be at least equal to that. I found many of the same books and copies of the codices that were used. In each book, I found lists of references and sought those materials as well. I also had the advantage of finding more recent material that hadn’t existed during the time of the author’s research.

I created rituals that simulated some of the Aztec rites and with help from Tamarra James, these were performed in the WCC with varying results. One such ritual even involved blood sacrifice, with about twenty-five people choosing to offer a single drop of their own blood in sacrifice.

As a result of my own decade of research, I have concluded that there are three things that one should keep in mind if and when performing a ritual sacrifice:

1. That the sacrifice is made willingly and is not



coerced or compromised

2. That there should be an emotional attachment to the item being offered and that it is truly the best of what you have to offer (your prize calf, not the sick one who is not much longer for this world anyway)

3. That there are no expectations on what will be received in exchange. (You don’t always get what you’re expecting, but you just might get exactly what you need – be it a reward or a slap upside the head.)

This last one is essential as there is a huge difference between making a sacrifice and making a deal. Aztec warriors who died upon the altar always went willingly with hopes for a glorious afterlife, but also with the recognition that you can’t always get what you want and sometimes the answer to a prayer can be “no”.

My studies into concepts of sacrifice continues to this day. My current career in a multi-faith environment allows me to work, speak with and learn from chaplains from many other faith groups such as Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Rasta, Sikh, and of course, Christian. Needless to say, this allows for many chances to learn from their ideas about and concepts of sacrifice.

For the curious, the book that started me on this path was AZTEC by Gary Jennings, 1980

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