



From the Edges and Hedges

The Coalition of Earth Religions /CERES
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Welcome to *From the Edges and Hedges*, a newsletter of The Coalition of Earth Religions/ CERES. We're going to mark each holy day with a new issue (we hope) and if you have short seasonal writings you'd like to share with your community, please contact us at info@ceres-wnc.org. This issue, we welcome Diotima Mantineaia in a regular astrology column and our contributors are Syren, Ginger Strivelli, Patrick Covington, Teresa Cline, and Christina N. Ayers, with a guest contribution from Ireland, courtesy of Janet Farrar. Did you see the piece in the AC-T about Winter Solstice? Featured were two CERES folks—Patrick Covington and Ginger Strivelli. Happy Yule, y'all!

Byron Ballard — Editor

Lightseed by Christina N. Ayers

At daybreak silver thread was revealed
by slices of white wakeful light.
Dew slid along labyrinth lines
intricacies, blown breath fine,
morning newness three times magnified.
Intuitive journey sweeps
latitude and longitude.
Each strike on glassy chords a symphony,
undetected to feeble instruments.
Butterfly halves quiver,
flap frustration, shiver to rest.
waiting for a moist
conclusion of the next breath.
Prisms caught through mute strings,
crystalline beads absorbed by wicking wings.
Curled in velvet acceptance, web-cupped,
tremor-wrapped. Cradle sway vibration
along slick strands. Threaded
brilliance catches glittering shield.
First seed of light to the soothing dark revealed.

The Spindle of the Ancient One by Teresa Cline

The days between Samhain and Solstice are spun out like ebony ribbon loosened from the spindle of the Ancient One. As the cold of winter covers the land She bids us follow the strand into its darkness, into the cavernous womb of renewal, and in re-kindling hope, to believe that the light will return. The waning year of the Sun is a labyrinth of days, footsteps falling closely one upon the next into the darkening of the year. The dimly lit path leads deeper into the turning of the way, spiraling ever inward, to anchor in the promise of the center. There burns the flame, the spark, an ember growing brighter, the beginning of light and life.

Now is the time for resting and waiting, shuttering ourselves deep into dreaming, into inward seeking, into ever-knowing. It is a time for reflection and inner meanderings, for wanderings into wonder. It is a time for working down to bone and dust. It is the labor of forgetting and remembering, of binding up and releasing, of sips of sadness and great, gulping swallows of joy, for diving into the abyss and surfacing again into the glowing spark of returning light.

It is a time for listening; listening with your whole self with mind wide-open for the voice of wisdom, guidance, inspiration and choices. Listen, it is a roar and the breath of a sigh, a whisper in falling snow, a teasing shred of sound torn from the rush and clamor of our lives. It is within the sound of stillness blanketed by night, amid the shifting of possibilities. So, now in the time of greatest darkness seek your light, for it will return. Seek your stillness, within it lies peace. Seek yourself and be found. Seek the blanket of dusk, the protection of night, the comfort of the hearth, and the joys of the heart.

A Modest (Parade) Proposal

by Patrick Covington

Recently, an individual wrote a letter to the Asheville Citizen-Times expressing her wish that the local Holiday Parade be returned to its “original intent” of being specifically a Christmas parade and that non-Christians — she specifically mentioned Wiccans, Pagans, and Atheists — should go off and organize their own parade.

Of course, should this come to pass, it would be only fair that this “Christmas Parade” get rid of all of its Pagan aspects. For example, floats could no longer be allowed to have decorated trees, since this is clearly a Pagan magical practice from pre-Christian Europe. Similarly all sorts of greenery—evergreen boughs, holly, mistletoe—would also have to be abolished since decorating with these items is, again, Pagan in origin. The Merchants’ Association could no longer be allowed to sponsor the parade since the practice of exchanging gifts at the Winter Solstice far predates Christianity. The parade could no longer end with greetings from a fellow who flies through the air with the aid of magical animals and dispenses gifts. Isn’t that Odin? Or Thor? And then there’s that kid who’s born in a stable and worshipped by shepherds. Sounds an awful lot like Mithras — out with him!

Oh yes, there’s one more bit of Pagan influence here—the parade itself. Long before Christianity came on the scene, people were celebrating the Winter Solstice by organizing joyful processions through towns and villages, processions that included singing and noisemaking and no doubt the ancient equivalent of high school marching bands. Come to think of it, rather than being kicked out of the holiday parade by Christians, we Pagans should be commended for our generosity in allowing Christians to participate in what is actually our parade full of our symbols and celebrations. Sure, these Christians are latecomers to the party and can get a bit presumptuous at times. But we’ll be glad to let them join our parade—as long as they behave themselves.

Musings on the Season

by Syren

Well, we have begun a new moon cycle, and we have passed the Dark Moon before the Solstice. As the light of the moon waxes, we can feel the light of the sun wane, as we spiral deeper into the darkness of this time. How does this energy feel to you? How does it manifest in your life? Are you feeling the rush rush of social events and holiday celebration? Are you tuning in with the darkening

days? Looking forward to the growing light?

This time of year has always been interesting for me, and sometimes hard to put a finger on. I guess that is the magic of it, huh? We have our eyes to the light, and indeed that is often the focus of these celebrations, yet the days are shorter and the nights longer and we reside in the darkest time of the year.

There are bright and shiny decorations everywhere, a sense of

stress and glee among those around us, we are expected to make merry and go to parties. Spending time together at this time of year certainly does not go against the ancestral ways, as we were often cooped up indoors around the fire with one another, staying warm with drink and warm hearts. It was cheerful, yet reverent, and certainly their thoughts often turned to the days in which the sun would shine brightly over the land once again. And surely a few family squabbles would pop up now and then to make things interesting, and we can certainly still experience that!

So it seems that this is a season of both natural and forced contraction, and that is ok. I enjoy this dark time greatly; getting in some early beautiful star-gazing, resting as the night overtakes us, magick all around. Yet the candles remind me that this time will soon change, and the light will begin to grow again. We must treasure it all.



Urania's Well: Astrology for Changing Times By Diotima Mantinea

Yule 2007 through Imbolc 2008

The big news during the six weeks or so between Yule and Imbolc is the heavy weather around the Winter Solstice point – 0° of Capricorn. This is a critically powerful point in the Zodiac, and planets are clustering around it. Here's what's going on:

Big, expansive Jupiter has met powerful and intense Pluto at 28° Sagittarius, and they are moving ahead to the Winter Solstice point of 0° Capricorn. The full moon on 12/24 is at 1° of Cancer – the Sun and Moon conjoining or opposing Jupiter and Mars and Pluto. Look for major power plays and extreme events—possibly large storms—on the world stage around this time. Particularly given the timing of these configurations—when so many people are caught up in the often intense family emotions of the season—big parties as well as big emotional eruptions are likely. Extreme behaviors—smoldering anger, great courage, profound examples of generosity, temper tantrums and grandiosity are all to be expected.

As always, the planetary energies bring gifts to those who are willing to work with them. Expansive Jupiter and intense Pluto, as they move into Capricorn, ask us to be profoundly and ethically practical. Financial conditions will continue to deteriorate globally as Pluto moves into Capricorn. The insurance, investment and banking industries are highlighted, and gambling, as well. Big business and big government may well face major losses and will go through profound changes over the 17 years Pluto remains in Capricorn. Have you positioned yourself well for a changing and extremely uncertain economic climate?

Look in your chart for the house in which 0° Capricorn falls, and also note any planets that fall between 28° of Mutable signs, and 2° of Cardinal signs. The house in which 0° Capricorn falls, and the houses ruled by any planets you have in that range of degrees, will give you an indication of how and where the planets will be energizing you at this time.

Work with the planets in your personal life and look closely at your financial realities and the security of

your home base. Saturn in Virgo now rewards discipline, restraint, and a keen eye for reality. It also tends to bring health issues to the forefront globally. Look in your own chart for the house placement and aspects of transiting and natal Saturn to trigger some thought and soul searching around where in your life you could use to be more practical and grounded.

In spiritual practice, grounding and centering is called for to keep these energies in balance as we move towards the fires of Imbolc. You might even want to try learning some different practices for grounding and centering. Look at where you need to expand and where you overdo it. Work with the element of Earth and the ideas of manifestation, limitation, and profound change.

Bright blessings of the season!

Jack Frost by Ginger Strivelli



Jack Frost's winter wonderland is awash in white
Ice cycles are standing sentry all night.
Tiny tornados turning and twisting the snowflakes,
along with the skiers, snowboarders, and skaters on
frozen lakes.

They all think that the season is too short
rushing, running, racing to their snow sports.
Yuletide trappings here, there and everywhere.
caroling persons cruisings about without a care. 'tis
quite cold, but you won't hear me whine.
Jack Frost is ruling for fun and with flair.
painting wintry white everywhere as he does dare.
The Solstice sun is setting low in the sky,
over the happy holly and evergreens, heads held
high,
above the lovelorn leaveless trees of summer
green,
Jack Frost did give them coats of snow, he's not
mean.

But they seem to shiver still in the snow
So am I, but Jack, my love, please don't go...
stay a while yet and dance with me more,
for winter is the season I do most adore.

Invocation to the Holly King

by Ginger Strivelli

Today we do bid hail to our beloved holly King.
With these ancient carols, we do again sing.
He who is called father Christmas is returning yet
again,
As the Solstice's longest night has finally begun,
We await you, Santa Claus, Lord of Winter,
To honor you on this day that you always were,
Saint Nicholas, patron of all the children on Gaia's
sphere,
This invocation, we pray, you do hear.
Come and bless us on this season of the Yuletide,
Great Holly King, as you fly upon your sleigh ride,
Whether your gifts to us be physical or spiritual,
We know that they will always be most magical,
Grateful, because we know your blessings' great
worth,
We offer a blessing of our own...Peace On Earth!



The Folklore of the Wren

An extraordinarily persistent version of the Holly King/Oak King theme at the Winter Solstice is the ritual hunting and killing of the wren—a folklore tradition found as far apart in time and space as ancient Greece and Rome and today's British Isles. The wren, “little king” of the Waning Year, is killed by his Waxing Year counterpart, the robin redbreast, who finds him hiding in an ivy bush (or sometimes in Ireland in a holly bush, as befits the Holly King). The robin's tree is the birch, which follows the Winter Solstice in the Celtic tree-calendar. In the acted-out ritual, men hunted and killed the wren with birchrods.

In Ireland, the “Wren Boys” day is St. Stephen's Day, 26th December. In some places (the fishing village of Kilbaha in County Clare on the Shannon estuary, for example), the Wren Boys are groups of adult musicians, singers and dancers in colourful costumes, who go from house to house bearing the tiny effigy of a wren on a bunch of holly. In County Mayo the Wren Boys (and girls) are parties of children, also bearing holly bunches, who knock on our doors and recite their jingle to us:

*“The wren, the wren, the king of the birds,
On Stephen's Day was caught in the furze;
Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
And give us some money to bury the wren.”*

It used to be ‘a penny’, but inflation has outstripped tradition. All holly decorations in Ireland must be cleared out of the house after Christmas; it is considered unlucky to let these Waning Year symbols linger.

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by Janet and Stewart Farrar
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