Welcome to the Autumn Equinox.

We have reached another point of the year when day and night are equal. The temperature is getting cooler and colorful leaves are falling from the trees. We saw the first acorn on one of the smaller oak trees in the yard. This is when we celebrate the second of three harvests. It seems like yesterday we were celebrating the first fruits and now we are harvesting the grains. We begin to prepare ourselves for the coming dark part of the year. Every day will grow shorter until after the Winter Solstice.

In August, I was able spend time with my friend and mentor, Deanne. Together, we created Knots of Isis. Deanne told me about them and showed me how to make them. We used polymer clay and baked them in the oven. I made mine to stand up on my altar and Deanne made hers to lay flat. We had a gathering with a few of the local women and two other Apple Branch women for ritual.

We learned about bind runes and each picked out a piece of wood. For my bind rune, I selected Fehu, Uruz, Kenaz and Laguz. While drawing the bind rune, I discovered Raidho was also there. I chalked it up to a happy accident. We had a lovely time together and I hope it is not another six years before we see each other again.

May you all be blessed with an abundant harvest.

Blessings of the Season,

Dawn
Contents

Welcome to the Autumn Equinox.............................................................................................................................................. 1
Ask Mama Donna by Mama Donna Henes.......................................................................................................................... 3
Book Review 365 Tarot Spells by Sasha Graham .................................................................................................................. 6
Book Review 365 Tarot Spreads by Sasha Graham .................................................................................................................. 7
Equinox Prayer by Danika Amun............................................................................................................................................. 8
From Belladonna’s Garden: Sage by Dawn Thomas................................................................................................................ 9
Inviting the Apple Goddesses into Your Life by Hayley Arrington ....................................................................................... 12
Moon Schedule Autumn Equinox to Winter Solstice ............................................................................................................... 17
One Red Leaf by Deanne Quarrie.......................................................................................................................................... 19
Pagan Every Day: Fides by Barbara Ardinger, PhD .................................................................................................................. 21
Pagan Every Day: Isia by Barbara Ardinger, PhD..................................................................................................................... 21
Solitary Autumn Equinox Ritual by Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas ......................................................................................... 23
Thoughts on Fall Equinox by Danika Amun .......................................................................................................................... 25
Credits..................................................................................................................................................................................... 27
A Question of Spirit Healing

Dear Mama Donna,

I have a friend who has been very sick lately with lymphoma, HIV related KS and an embolism. Can you suggest anything from your bag of healing aids that I can get for him?

Worried in Wisconsin

Dear Worried,

First of all, I thank you in the name of all human and holy comfort for being such a good, caring friend. Your healing intentions add blessings to his life and yours and to all life everywhere.

Secondly, please know that my work is in healing the psyche and the spirit, rather than the physical — if there is, indeed, a difference. So that is what I will address.

It is important for you and your friend to understand that healing and curing are not necessarily the same thing. Curing is about reversing the effects of illness; returning the body to health, if not precisely the way things were.

Healing is about dealing with the current state of affairs and coming to terms with the situation and adjusting to the new reality with equanimity. That is not to say to resign to being ill, but to accept it as a challenge to learn some deep lessons. This process is not only healing, but can also be curative. Attitude is all.

How is your friend’s spirit, his outlook, his way with himself?

One of my clients just succeeded in transforming her thyroid cancer. She had been bitter, but determined to get better. She fought the disease with fury. She had chemo and radiation, which succeeded only in making her sicker.
But at some point during her ordeal, she realized what her body was trying to tell herself. Since she had not listened to the messages from her body or her own deepest inner wisdom for 50 years, it needed to explode — into an invasive tumor— to be finally to be heard.

She came to realize that her cancer was all the suppressed words, anger, outcries that she had swallowed all her life. She made friends with her body instead of hating it for letting her down. She began to embrace the disease as a part of herself, which it was — her own cells that burst through the repressive boundaries that she had imposed on herself.

Her realization led to her healing. In her case, she was also cured.

Encourage your friend to engage in activities that will nourish his soul and help live with a positive attitude. Journaling, meditating, visualizations and drawing are excellent ways that pave the path to our knowledge and centered outlook.

Annie Dillard wrote, “I cannot cause light; most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam.” It might not always be possible to cure someone. But we can encourage a profound healing.

Sending blessings of spirit support to you both,

xxMD

*Are you cyclically confused? In a ceremonial quandary? Completely clueless? Wonder no more. *Send your questions about seasons, cycles, celebrations, ceremonies and spirit to Mama Donna at: CityShaman@aol.com

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Donna Henes is an internationally renowned urban shaman, ritual expert, award-winning author, popular speaker and workshop leader whose joyful celebrations of celestial events have introduced ancient traditional rituals and contemporary ceremonies to millions of people in more than 100 cities since 1972. She has published four books, a CD, an acclaimed Ezine and writes for The Huffington Post, Beliefnet and UPI Religion and Spirituality Forum. Mama Donna, as she is affectionately called, maintains a ceremonial center, spirit shop, ritual practice and consultancy in Exotic Brooklyn, NY where she offers intuitive tarot readings and spiritual counseling and works with individuals, groups, institutions, municipalities and corporations to create meaningful ceremonies for every imaginable occasion.
www.DonnaHenes.net
www.TheQueenOfMySelf.com

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna_Henes

Watch her videos:
http://www.youtube.com/user/MamaDonnaHenes

Follow her on Twitter:
http://twitter.com/queenmamadonna

Connect with her on Facebook:
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Read her on the Huffigton Post:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-henes/

Read her on Beliefnet:
http://blog.beliefnet.com/thequeenofmyself/
Ms. Graham begins this book with a homage to Janina Renee’s *Tarot Spells*. She describes her first experience using Janina’s book. During her reading, the author realized the question she asked was not what she needed to know. There were more ways to connect to nature and create sacred space. This prompted her to create this book.

Sasha believes magic is understood in a threefold process using desire (thoughts and ideas), feelings (align yourself and visualize) and action (the spell). She explains the importance of magic and shows readers how they can connect with it.

The author realized her first book, *365 Tarot Spreads*, was a great starting point for a spell book. As in her previous book, a bit of trivia is at the beginning of each daily spell. Reader can pick any tarot deck they feel comfortable using. Ms. Graham suggests reading each spell in advance and any tools needed gathered before the reader begins a spell. It is important to follow her guidelines to create sacred space and the three steps to responsible magic.

Each daily spell includes a method, visualization and meditation. The spells are easy to follow and do not require special ingredients. One spell from the book is the Caramel Lace for Grace and Elegance. All that is needed is the Three of Cups card, a small saucepan, spoon, parchment paper, water, sugar and salt. I looked at the tarot card and visualized the future while I was stirring the ingredients in the saucepan. Once the caramel was formed, I poured it onto the parchment paper. Later I will be able to eat the caramel when I need to be delicate.

I recommend this book to anyone that has a closeness with tarot. This would be a wonderful way to enhance your connection.
Book Review 365 Tarot Spreads by Sasha Graham
Review by Dawn Thomas

408 Pages
Publisher: Llewellyn Publications

Tarot, Divination, Ritual, Magic

Ms. Graham begins the book with a short introduction in which she explains tarot and the art of asking a question. All questions come down to the same themes: love, money, career, and life path. She discusses what it means to be human along with the challenges she faced while writing this book. There is also a brief section on the importance of calendars and time.

The book is divided into months with a different theme every day and each entry has a bit of trivia. The daily themes run from financial to health concerns. I love the concept of a different tarot spread for each day. In the past, I used to pull a card a day and then ask what was in store for me. Using spreads gives me more information than a single card. One day, I created an eight-card spread. The information I received from the cards was illuminating. I do not think I could have received so much information with a single or even a three-card pull.

The spreads are not difficult and are easy to do for yourself or others. Another nice aspect is the ability to use any deck of cards for these spreads. I recommend this book to anyone that enjoys working with tarot and learning new spreads.
Equinox Prayer by Danika Amun

Lord and Lady come to me
Give me peace for the things that shall be
As the night gains a hold
Let blessings come threefold
With the Equinox approaching
Your wisdom I shall be minding
As the earth dies to be born anew
Let me not falter or go askew
Help me find the peace within
So my soul’s flight can begin
Lady may your bright blessing be
Always within me
Sage
(Salvia officinalis)

Folk name:
Garden Sage, Red Sage
Gender:
Masculine
Planet: Jupiter
Element: Air
Powers:
Immortality, Longevity, Wisdom, Protection, Wishes

Botanical
The name Salvia comes from the Latin for “to save or to heal” as in “salvation.” It is an aromatic evergreen with blue/purple flowers. It grows about a foot tall with wiry stems. The gray-green textured leaves are in grow in pairs along the stem. The plant originates in the Mediterranean but now can be found in most countries.

Culinary Uses
Most people probably recognize sage as a component of poultry seasoning. I love making stuffing with sage seasoned sausage in the fall. The house smells so wonderful when I brown it in my cast-iron pan. Sage not only compliments poultry, it goes well with pork and vegetables too. According to historical documents, recipes for sage pancakes date back to the 5th century, B.C.E.

One of my favorite things to eat in the autumn is sage and onion stuffing. It goes great with turkey but also with pork. We had it this week with a pork tenderloin with shallots. I use a variation to the directions on the stuffing package. I add a package
of sage sausage, a cut up onion, 5 tablespoons butter and 2 cups of chicken broth to the package then bake it in the oven.

**Cosmetic Use**

*Sage Tea Rinse for Gray Hair*
Sage has been used over the years to darken gray hair. What I like about the results from this recipe is the subtle effect it has on my hair. I do not have a lot of gray hair but I do have a streak on the right side of my head. I tell people it is just tinsel.

**Ingredients**
1 cup fresh or dried sage leaves
8 ounces boiling water
1 teaspoon borax
Glass jar with tight fitting lid

**Directions**
Place in a glass jar. Pour the boiling water over the leaves. Add the borax and stir. Close the lid and allow the mixture to cool. Use a brush or sponge to apply it to your hair.

**Homeopathic Uses**
Sage can be used topically on sores or taken internally. Care must be taken in people with epilepsy. Too much sage may trigger seizures.

Sage tea is good for coughs, sore throats, excessive mucus in the throat, nose and sinuses. As a woman’s herb, it combats night sweats and eases menstrual discomfort. New mothers can drink sage tea to help dry up breast milk but pregnant women should not use large amounts. Sage tea provides relief for gas and bloating and aids digestion.

*Sage Tea*

**Ingredients**
2 teaspoons dried ground sage
1 cup boiling water

**Directions**
Place the dried herb in a glass jar. Pour boiling water over the herb and let steep for at least 20 minutes. Drink 1/4 cup every six hours.

**History and Folklore**
In the Middle Ages, sage was strewn in homes to get rid of odors and provide a fresh aroma. There is an ancient proverb which states, “Why should a man die who has sage in his garden?” The Romans considered it to be sacred and had a ceremony to pick it. They also used it as a toothpaste. The Greeks used it to treat ulcers and snake bites. Native Americans burn it to remove negative energy. The condition of the sage plant in your garden, reflects your financial situation.

**Magical Uses**
Sage has been used to bring wisdom, immortality and wealth. It is used as smudging for purification when preparing sacred space. It protects from psychic attacks and is associated with the third eye chakra. Before ritual, bathing with sage cleanses and purifies the body and mind. If you have a wish you want to come true, write it on a sage leaf and place it under your pillow. If you dream of your wish within three nights, your dream will come true.

Bio: Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas is a High Priestess and Elder of The Apple Branch, a Dianic Tradition. She is the editor and book reviewer for the Oracle and was the Treasurer for The Global Goddess, a non-profit organization. In 2014, she graduated from the University of Florida fulfilling a lifelong goal of completing her college education. She has been published in several magazines for her papercrafting designs. She is the owner and certified soapmaker of Belladonna’s Garden (www.belladonnasgarden.com). She is an avid gardener and lives in Florida with her husband. Other book reviews can be found on her blog: http://becomingbelladonna.blogspot.com/
Inviting the Apple Goddesses into Your Life by Hayley Arrington

Within Goddess traditions, autumn heralds the beginning of our descent into darkness. Following the Equinox, when day and night are of equal length, daylight wanes and we are left with longer and longer nights. This darkening can be a useful analogy for women’s lived experiences. Simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, at this time when we may be going within, many of us come together in gratitude for the harvest, what we have harvested from the fields and what we have harvested within our lives.

We can easily and happily symbolize this inner and outer harvest with the apple. Born and raised in suburban Los Angeles, I was lucky enough to have access to many fruit trees, including a beautiful apple tree in my maternal grandparents’ backyard. Every September, I would pick and eat them at whim. As I’ve grown into womanhood, I’ve discovered the beauty of Goddess religion in myriad forms, including honoring the abundance of Earth during all of Her harvest times, for in Southern California, we are able to grow many different foods all year long.

The apple tree is one beautiful form of the Goddess. To our ancestors, apple orchards were important parts of agricultural life. The apple has long been a commodity crop; it is a very ancient fruit. It fills people’s lives with pleasure because of how it is consumed—from the sweetest pies to the heartiest ciders—but pleasure can also be had from biting into its sun-warmed flesh and feeling its juices run down our cheeks.

There are many ways we can invite apple Goddesses into our lives. Below, I’ve introduced three goddesses of apples and orchards with whom we can work in the autumn-tide or at any time during the year.

Pomona

Pomona, who rules over fruit trees and abundance, was once widely worshipped. Pomona’s name comes from the Latin pomum meaning apple or fruit, as exemplified in the French as “pomme,” meaning, apple. Her name is also the origin for the word “pomegranate” in English, which actually means “seeded apple.” When I think of Pomona, I envision a glorious woman walking amongst beautifully tended orchards for as far as the eye can see.
We can honor the Roman Goddess Pomona by visiting nearby apple orchards and placing apples on an altar expressly for the Harvest Sabbat, or somewhere like a mantel or hearth that speaks to home and its gifts. Her most familiar myths have to do with her spurning lovers and with her eventually choosing a husband. In this way, Pomona can teach us about waiting for love until the time is right for a lover. As she is specifically associated with orchards, we can invoke Pomona when needing the special kind of tending that is provided to orchards. When tended correctly, orchards supply abundant crops and help to maintain prosperity. She is an especially apt Goddess to honor at Harvest time.

Invocation to Pomona

O Lady of the Orchard
The trees are heavy laden with your fruit
I ask that the bounty you provide to the apple trees you likewise provide to me
O Lady of the Orchard
Beauteous Goddess of apple trees
Lend your blessings to your daughter
I thank thee for all you provide
Blessed be

Morgan le Fey

In many ways, Morgan le Fey is a mysterious Goddess. For some, she is little more than a sister of King Arthur and an enchantress, who learned her magical arts on the Isle of Avalon. However, it is her association with this famed island which elucidates her true identity as Goddess of the Apple Isle. Avalon literally means “island of apples,” and we know from early source material that Avalon is no mere island of Britain—it is a veritable Eden where all manner of foodstuffs grow without the aid of human hands. Most famous are the island’s eponymous apple orchards.

Morgan is the original Apple Goddess of Avalon. We modern-day women can go to her when we seek to reap our inherent magical gifts, when we wish to make journeys (physical or spiritual) of pilgrimage, and when we wish to invoke the blessings that apples symbolize into our lives.

Invocation to Morgan

Goddess of the Apple Isle
Lady of Avalon
Beautiful enchantress
Bring favor to your daughter
May the silver apples of the island lend their magic to my life
May every bite of an apple remind me of you and your gifts
Blessed be

Inanna
Inanna may not be the first Goddess you think of when you think of apple tree Goddesses, but since she is part of the ancient Middle East, this association should come as no surprise. Like Eve, with her forbidden fruit, Inanna, too, has fruiting trees associated with her; but in this case, they relate positively to her sexuality and fecundity. In one of her lesser known myths, “The Huluppu-Tree,” Inanna placed a glorious sapling in her holy garden, tended it, and waited for it to grow large so that she could have a throne and a bed made from it. Those items would bring about her fullness as Goddess and as a woman. As the years passed, this tree others inhabited the tree:

A serpent who could not be charmed  
Made its nest in the roots of the tree,  
The Anzu-bird set his young in the branches of the tree,  
And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk.

Diane Wolkstein writes that, “Inanna waits; but her tree does not come into the fruition she wishes. Instead it becomes the habitat of Inanna’s unacknowledged fears and desires” (p. 141). To those of us who grew up in a Judeo-Christian household, we see many familiar things in this stanza: tree, snake, and Lilith. The tree in Inanna’s holy garden is very similar to the tree in the Garden of Eden, Genesis story of the Old Testament. Here, we can equate Lilith (and the absent Eve) with Inanna—Lilith is Inanna’s “dark maid” aspect and Lilith is a sort of empowered Eve. The mythic huluppu-tree is unidentified, but it may well be a date palm. I find that there is evidence that this tree, from which her throne and bed will be made, could very well have been an apple tree. In other myth-hymns, the apple tree is either equated with or closely associated with, Inanna’s vulva: “When she leaned against the apple tree, her vulva was wondrous to behold. Rejoicing at her wondrous vulva, the young woman Inanna applauded herself” (Wolkstein & Kramer, p. 12). Inanna’s vulva is the seat of her power. Elsewhere, Inanna goes with her husband Dumuzi and “by an apple tree, I knelt as is proper” and “poured out plants from my womb” (p. 40). Clearly, the apple tree relates to Inanna’s fecundity.

By working with Inanna, we can harvest that which we have worked so hard on throughout the year. Inanna is a wonderfully complex Goddess. She is immediate, relatable, and so worthy of praise as a Goddess. Indeed, she is a particularly wonderful Goddess to work with if you have any issues surrounding sexuality, domestic abuse, rape, issues with patriarchy as this pre-patriarchal Goddess was also confronted with the advent of patriarchy in Sumer and Akkad.

There are many of her hymns and myths from the ancient world available today and reciting them is a wonderful way for invoking Inanna into your life and ritual space.
Invocation to Inanna
   O glorious Inanna
   You who are older than the word
   Lady of the apple tree
   Bless this woman
   Lend your gifts of the apple to me
   I, too, seek to reap my own gifts
   Ancient Goddess
   Lady of the apple tree, bless me
   Blessed be

There are many ways we can invite the Apple Goddesses into our lives. We can read their myths, sing their hymns, or compose invocations. Selena Fox recommends using a cornucopia as a ritual tool for invoking harvest and abundance deities. I love this beautifully creative idea. Know that the apple is a rich symbol of the harvest of the Earth and can also be a rich symbol of the harvest within our lives—of our healing or healed sexuality, our empowered sexuality and womanhood. Pomona, Morgan le Fay, and Inanna are three Goddesses we can decide to honor at the Autumn Equinox and at any time that we are harvesting the fruits of our labors. At the Autumn Equinox, let the Witches’ Thanksgiving remind us of all for which we are grateful. Blessed be.

References:
Fox, Selena: https://www.circlesanctuary.org/index.php/circle-magazine/sample-articles/cornucopia-horn-of-plenty
Betty De Shong Meador (1992) Uncursing the Dark
Caitlín and John Matthews (1992) Ladies of the Lake
Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer (1983) Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth

Images:
Inanna and Tree Spirit. Line drawing after cylinder seal impression detail. Wolkstein & Kramer.
Bio: Hayley Arrington earned her M.A. in women’s spirituality from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, where she wrote her thesis on Celtic sun goddesses. Her interests include mythology and folklore as sacred text, writing essays, fiction and poetry, and discovering women’s myriad ways of knowing. Initiated into the Twilight Wiccan tradition, she is very active in Twilight Spiral Coven. Hayley was born and raised in the suburbs of Los Angeles, where she still lives with her husband, David and their son, Stephen.
Moon Schedule Autumn Equinox to Winter Solstice

By Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas

(Times are Eastern Time)

4th Quarter – September 23rd 5:56 a.m.

New Moon – September 30th 3:52 a.m.

2nd Quarter – October 9th 12:33 a.m.

Full “Blood” Moon – October 16th 12:23 a.m.

4th Quarter – October 22nd 3:14 p.m.

New Moon – October 31st 1:38 p.m.

Moon Void of Course Schedule

| September 23rd | 3:57 a.m. | 4:33 a.m. |
| September 24th | 9:42 p.m. | September 25th 9:48 a.m. |
| September 27th | 4:52 a.m. | 5:43 p.m. |
| September 29th | 6:05 a.m. | September 30th 3:52 a.m. |
| October 2nd | 1:43 a.m. | 3:43 p.m. |
| October 4th | 9:04 p.m. | October 5th 4:26 a.m. |
| October 7th | 2:26 a.m. | 4:40 p.m. |
| October 9th | 12:51 p.m. | October 10th 2:33 a.m. |
| October 11th | 7:49 p.m. | October 12th 8:43 a.m. |
| October 14th | 3:13 a.m. | 11:08 a.m. |
| October 16th | 12:23 a.m. | 11:04 a.m. |
| October 17th | 10:47 a.m. | October 18th 10:30 a.m. |
| October 20th | 7:17 a.m. | 11:28 a.m. |
| October 22nd | 3:14 p.m. | 3:34 p.m. |
| October 24th | 8:21 a.m. | 11:16 p.m. |
| October 26th | 2:33 p.m. | October 27th 9:51 a.m. |
| October 29th | 6:09 a.m. | 10:01 p.m. |
Planting Days
September: 23th, 24th
October: 3rd, 4th, 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 20th, 21st, 22nd

Harvesting Days
September: 22nd, 25th, 26th, 27th
October: 18th, 19th, 23rd, 24th
It seems to me that the goal of most people is to be happy. We seek it ourselves and hope that those we love find it as well. Happy is an elusive state. At best it is hard to define – what is happy anyway?

As young adults we may seek happiness in alcohol and parties, perhaps even in drugs. We hope to find it in our careers and certainly in the unions we make and partners we choose. Happy is to be pleased, or glad, over a particular thing. The dictionary associates a state of happiness with contentment as well as with the experience of joy. And it also says that happiness is associated with good fortune or luck.

I think the last is very telling about happiness. It says to me that no matter how we live our lives, no matter most of our actions, so long as they are done with good intent, happiness is a random emotional experience.

Even more random is a state of joy. Certainly experiencing joy brings feelings of happiness. For me, however, joy is larger, something bigger than happiness. It is more fleeting and certainly is random and unpredictable.

When I look back over my life, I clearly remember many moments of joy, the birth of each of my children, heart soaring moments of bliss. Even small joys, those that can be found in each day if we are open to them, remain fixed in our memories. Moments of beauty seen in another human being, breath-taking glimpses into nature such as a red setting sun, a pounding ocean, or even the small features of a small black beetle.

There have been times for me, when plagued with worry, loss of work, aloneness and fear, that when they seemed to drag on, I found that what made them telling for me was that they were periods in my life entirely lacking in joy. I also came to recognize that it wasn’t what triggered joy that was absent but simply my lack of awareness or openness to see and feel it.

I had one of those times that I remember clearly. It was about this time of year, which is probably what has triggered me to write about it. It was turning cold and the leaves were falling from the trees as they prepared for their time of quiet. I was having a “pitty pot” day. Feelings of doom and gloom and longing already for spring, even though we had not yet even experienced winter. I was thinking about all of these feelings and recognizing how little joy seemed to be in my life at this moment. Walking along, I
looked up and right at that moment a beautiful red leaf fell from an ornamental pear tree in front of me. I watched as it gracefully dropped to the ground. As it fell, with pristine clarity, I felt overwhelming feelings of elation and joy! Out of nowhere, and randomly, came the totally certainty that in that one moment – I had found my joy!

One red leaf
Falls to the ground,
Before me a moment of total clarity
And the experience heartfelt joy.

A heart lifted
From the darkness of persistent gloom.
A day brightened
In utter simplicity - one red leaf.

As we enter into this season of festive celebrations, as Thanksgiving Day approaches, let us all remember the joys of the past, those moments that light us through the darkness. Let us give thanks for those perfect moments, given when we least expect them. And let us remain open to seeing and feeling them in the coming days. May we find those moments of joy everywhere!

*Deanne Quarrie. D. Min. is a Priestess of The Goddess and a practicing Druid. She is the author of five books. She is the founder of the Apple Branch and Beyond the Ninth Wave where she teaches courses in Druidism, Celtic Shamanism, and Feminist Dianic Wicca and mentors those who wish to serve others in their communities. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Ocean Seminary College and is the founder of Global Goddess, a worldwide organization open to all women who honor some form of the divine feminine.*
Like Pax, Concordia, and Salus, Fides is one of Rome’s abstract civic goddesses. Her name translates as Faith. We hear its echoes in *fidelity* and *infidel*. Fides signifies not the faith between people (as in fidelity in a marriage), but faith between the deity and humankind. The procession to the Capitol was led by the three chief *flamines* (priests), who wrapped their right hands in white cloth bands to symbolize that faith must be maintained. They offered sacrifices to Faith and Honor, and people who attended the sacrifice may also have wrapped their right hands in white bands. It is said that the right hand of the statue of Fides was wrapped to remind her to keep faith with her people.

Reader, what does Fides mean to modern pagans? To whom are we faithful? Most of us abandoned one faith – usually Christianity or Judaism (I’ve never met any Pagans who were formerly Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu) – so why do we think we’re going to be faithful pagans?

In the twenty-first century, it’s not practical to walk around with white cloth wrapped around your right hand, though we can do it for a ritual or meditation. After you’ve cast your circle, wrap white ribbon that you’ve never used before around your right hand three times. With each turn, speak aloud your promise of fidelity. Make a promise that you can keep, even if it’s no more than to hold the god or goddess in your heart.

We lead such busy lives that it’s useful to have something to remind us of Fides. Select one piece from your vast jewelry collection. Let it symbolize your fidelity. Cast your circle and declare your intention to keep the faith. Wear the jewelry. Any time you’re conscious that it’s touching your skin, say the name of the goddess or god. Be faithful to the path you’ve chosen.

Isis and Osiris civilized the land. Set murders Osiris. Isis sets forth and searches the world. In Phoenicia, she finds the body of Osiris in an acacia tree. She takes it home and hides it in the swamps of the Nile, but Set finds it again. He cuts it into fourteen pieces, which he scatters around Egypt. She finds thirteen of them, builds the fourteenth out of ivory, invents embalming, and pronounces magical words. From her labors of love, Isis creates life.
Reader, how many quests can you count? Demeter searches for her daughter. Theseus and Oedipus for fathers who disowned them. Ninshubur looks for her queen. The prince seeks the girl whose foot the shoe fits. Gilgamesh searches for immortality and the meaning of life. Cuchulainn seeks fame, Odin seeks the runes, and the steadfast tin soldier seeks true love. Arthur’s knights set out in search of the Holy Grail, Frodo and his companions set out to destroy the One Ring. Dorothy and her companions set out to find a brain, a heart, courage, and a way home. Gautama sets out to find enlightenment, and Grandmother Spider sets out to bring the sun to the people. The Ugly Duckling and Harry Potter are looking for people like themselves. All around the world, from time out of mind, people have been telling stories about people who are searching for something.

What is our quest in “real life”? Are we looking to marry a girl like Mom or a boy like Dad? The perfect career that’s both emotionally satisfying and significantly remunerative? The perfect priestess or ritual? A way through the Dark Night of the Soul?

A quest can be a dangerous journey through darkness, both inner and outer Darkness is coming. Reader, where will you be during the year’s longest night?

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Solitary Autumn Equinox Ritual by Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas

For the altar:
Candles: one yellow and one orange
An apple
A cup of wine or juice
A small cluster of grapes
Fall flowers or fall leaves

Set up your ritual area. Light the candles and arrange the grapes, the vine and flowers or leaves on the altar.

Casting the Circle
Take the apple and hold it in both hands. Feel the wisdom and love of the Goddess. She is generous.

“The apple is an ancient symbol of the Goddess with her great knowledge and power of healing. It holds Her wisdom and provides a gateway into other realms. Sacred is this space filled with the riches of the Great Mother.”

Call the Quarters
“Hail to the Spirits of the East, Element of Air, knowledge, and wisdom. Bless me with your gifts during the season of fall. Please join me tonight.”

“Hail to the Spirits of the South, Element of Fire, bring the warmth of sunlight to my day. Bring illumination and passion in many ways. Please join me tonight.”

“Hail to the Spirits of the West, Element of Water, come to this circle of mine. Add love, peace, and intuition in this place and time. Please join me tonight.”

“Hail to the Spirits of the North, Element of Earth, give me strength and success. Please join me tonight.”

“The circle is cast as above and so below.”

Call the Goddess
“The Autumn Equinox is the harvest of fruits and late grains. I ask the Goddess of Grain, Demeter, the Lady of the Harvest and bountiful earth. Bless me during this autumn season. I also ask Pomona, the Goddess of Apples to join me. Please share your sacred orchard with me."
At the autumn equinox a time of equal light and dark hours occurs. Help me to find balance and harmony within. Guide me with Your wisdom and remind me to be thankful for all of the blessings that I have in my life.

It is now time to pass from summer into the dark of the year. On this day of the equinox, this day of balance, it is the threshold where light begins to fade. As the nights grow longer, it is a time to cultivate inner wisdom.”

Meditation and Giving Thanks
“I raise my chalice in thanksgiving for what the Mother Earth has given me this year.”

Think of these questions and answer honestly. What is my personal harvest? What have I brought into manifestation this year? What can I do to honor the generosity of the Earth that sustains me? How might I thank my loved ones and acquaintances who have supported my creativity this year? How can I best acknowledge and celebrate myself for hard work completed this year?

Releasing the Goddess
“I thank you Demeter and Pomona for joining me this night. Hail and Farewell. Blessed Be.”

Releasing the Elements
“Spirit of the North, Element of the Earth, thank you for lending your strength and stability this night. Hail and Farewell. Blessed Be.”

“Spirit of the West, Element of Water, thank you for blessing me with loving emotions so right. Hail and Farewell. Blessed Be.”

“Spirit of the South, Element of Fire, thank you for your passion and illuminating light. Hail and Farewell. Blessed Be.”

“Spirit of the East, Element of Air, thank you for the winds of change that swirl within my life. Hail and Farewell. Blessed Be.”

Open the Circle
“The circle is open but remains unbroken.

Blessed be!
Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again.”
Thoughts on Fall Equinox by Danika Amun

As the old saying goes “Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it”. I feel this is especially true during the Fall Equinox (also known as the Mabon). For me this is the winding down of my year, a time to take stock and reflect on the past. In ancient times this was a season to gather the harvest, stockpile for the coming winter and to take time to thank the Lord and Lady for their many blessings. During this time, I thank several goddesses for their influence and coming blessings. The main ones that I relate to are:

Demeter (Greek Goddess of the harvest who possessed the knowledge on how to best grow, harvest, and preserve grain)

Freya (Nordic Goddess of fertility, love, wealth, divination, magic, and war)

Gaia (Greek Goddess of the earth and prophecy, the primordial mother, and a personification of mother earth)

Isis (Egyptian Goddess of life and magic)

Cerridwen (Celtic Goddess of moon, magic, agriculture, nature, the arts, and science)

Here are a few others that can be reflected upon in this time of harvest:

Artemis (Greek Goddess of independent spirit, the hunt, nature, and birth)

Ceres (Roman Goddess of agriculture and grains)

Rhea (Greek Goddess, ancient Titan earth goddess, responsible for the fertility of the soil and of women)

Seshat (Egyptian Goddess, the great scribe and librarian goddess, responsible for accounting, astronomy, historical records and mathematics)

It is during this time of personal harvest that I take stock of the blessings that have been given to me. I also reflect on what I should change in the upcoming years. If I don’t learn from the past I will be doomed to repeat it. As the leaves change and die, I try to put to rest my disappointments and sorrows. While we reap the bounties of Mother Earth in
this harvest, let us not forget to plant the seeds in our souls for next year’s harvest, so we may grow with the energies and love all around us.

Let us learn to embrace the seasonal cycles and apply their energies to not only our magical lives, but to our mundane as well. Any good farmer knows that to have a bountiful harvest year after year, you not only have to cultivate the seeds but also the soil. Let us not forget to look past our own actions and behaviors, to the root causes in order to grow and cultivate our souls. For if we deplete the soil of our bodies we will be doomed to repeat our past.
Credits

Thank you for reading the Oracle.

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