

Sophia's Well

A Wisdom and Wellness Center

Autumn Equinox 2016
Restoring Balance Through Gratitude

Chanting and drumming in the Season:

I greet you, spirits of the darkness
You dwell in the night and within me.

Lighting of the Fall Equinox Candles:

As we light this candle we unite ourselves with the ancient memories that sleep within, memories of ancestors whose hopes and dreams we carry. Let us be reminded of the strength of that connection, that river of humanity we carry in our souls.

Music: The Many Faces of God

Invocation:

"As we face the North, we connect with the powers of the Element Earth and call to mind blessings of the Physical realm in our lives in the past year. For Blessings of Earth, We Give Thanks!"

"As we face the East, we connect with the powers of the Element Air and call to mind blessings of the Mental realm in our lives in the past year. "For Blessings of Air, We Give Thanks!"

"As we face the South, we connect with the powers of the Element Fire and call to mind blessings of the Behavioral realm in our lives in the past year. "For Blessings of Fire, We Give Thanks!"

"As we face the West, we connect with the powers of the Element Water and call to mind blessings of the Emotional realm in our lives in the past year. "For Blessings of Water, We Give Thanks!"

All face Center. Leader: "As we face the Center, we connect with the powers of Spirit, that which connects us with each other, with the Sacred Directions and Elements, and with the Divine in many forms and that is the Unity of All That Is. Let us call to mind blessings of the spiritual realm in our lives in the past year. "For Blessings of Spirit, We Give Thanks!"

Welcome Arch Angel Michael:

On the Autumn Equinox, Archangel Uriel, Master of Universal Life Force Energy, who has been directing and energizing the growth cycle of plants and animals during the summer months, surrenders his position as Seasonal Archangel to Archangel Michael, who comes armed with subtle fire and a sword of iron, to redirect the Cosmic Forces from the Stars and the Life Force Energy welling up from deep within the Earth toward the support of accelerated spiritual growth.

Energy which has been energizing the three lower chakras during the exhalation of summer, now begins to stimulate the heart, the throat, third eye and crown, as we enter the time of increasing darkness, when the subtle senses must become ever more acute to guide us ever upward toward our lofty yearly spiritual goal -- giving

birth to the Divine within ourselves. That rebirth is scheduled to occur at the time of the Winter Solstice, and much work must be done to purify and attune the physical, emotional, mental and energetic vehicles of the human body in preparation. Michael guides us in the process of letting go of that which no longer serves us thus making room for the next cycle of growth.

The Deeper Meaning of Autumn Equinox

Fall Equinox is the harvest home festival, the in gathering time, when we bring in the crops, fill the woodshed and prepare for the cold. Now that days and nights are again equal we turn our thoughts to balance.

Fall Equinox is a time for evaluation. Did we plant enough of the right things? Did we tend our crops well? Have we nurtured what will truly feed us? How do we preserve what we harvest, so that it will continue to nourish us through hard times?

Above all, autumn equinox is a time to give thanks, to offer gratitude for what we have, and to remember the balance of all the elements that sustain our lives: gratitude to the earth, the living soil that grows our food; gratitude to the air we breathe, to the sun's warm rays, to the life giving rain and the flowing cleansing waters; gratitude toward our community, to our family and loved ones; and to all the families of beings that are linked to us in the web of life.

Gratitude is the counter to greed. If we neglect to say thanks for what we have, we will feel eternally dissatisfied and need more and more. When we express gratitude for what we have been given, then we find we need very little in order to feel surrounded by abundance.

In a just world, everyone would have enough to live sustainably, with room for beauty, pleasure, self-expression and love. May natural balance be restored.

Time of Reflection:

Sit comfortably in your chair with an erect easy posture. Begin by relaxing your physical body, taking a few deep breaths. Feel the chair supporting you, your feet uncrossed touching the floor. Notice where there is tension in the body and breathe into that area. Sink into a quiet place of ease and comfort. At the same time remain quietly alert and attentive.

When you have settled into your quiet inner space, begin to visualize yourself in a small cabin in the woods. It is autumn and there is a chill in the air. You have drawn your favorite padded chair up to the hearth, enjoying the warmth and crackle of the fire. Through a large window to your right you notice that sunlight shining through the trees, and magnificent colored leaves of gold, rust, orange and yellow are in full display. Every so often a gust of wind twirls a few leaves to the ground. You have a sense that life has slowed down, and you are in a reflective mood. Take a moment to turn inward. Bring the light of the soul star down into your heart center. Fill your emotional nature with the positive light of the soul. Now take a breath lift your attention to the mental nature. Allow limited mind to be guided by higher mind. Bring heart and mind into balance, allowing you to think in the heart and love with the mind. Return to the breath.

You now have a sense that it is time to examine your personal harvest, noting with gratitude all the blessings that have come your way in the past year: The first area you consider is the physical realm. Are there blessings that have come to you regarding your physical health? your home? your finances? material possessions? Gently open your eyes and jot down any blessings that are significant to you that have come from the physical realm.

When you feel complete with that again close your eyes and return to the quiet inner space. You are now asked to think about any blessings that may have come to you from the mental realm: Classes, studies, books or articles you have read, other ways you have grown in knowledge or wisdom? Again jot down anything you see that is particularly significant.

When you feel complete with the mental realm, please again close your eyes. Now you are asked to consider any blessings that may have come to you through the behavioral realm: Significant accomplishments at work, hobbies, travel or any other act of creation? Jot down those accomplishments that seem most important.

When you feel complete with the behavioral realm, please return to your quiet inner space. You are now taking a look at the emotional realm. Please consider any blessings you have received pertaining to your relational life, friendships, emotional healing and support. Jot down ways you have grown socially and emotionally.

When you feel complete with the emotional realm, please again close your eye. You are now asked to consider blessings that have come to you from the spiritual realm: consider sacred connections with the Divine, spiritual guidance received, transformative dreams and visions, experiences in spiritual community, visits to sacred sites, and other forms of spiritual growth.

After having harvested your personal blessings it is appropriate to take stock and consider what seeds you need to plant in the next cycle of growth. Are there areas in your lives where balance need to be restored? work and play/ material and spiritual/ inner and outer? Are there things that you need to release that no longer serve you? new things that would be appropriate to bring in? Make any notes you feel are needed.

Return for a moment to your comfortable chair before the fire. Thank spirit for having guided you in this personal harvest inventory. Drink in the sense of peace you feel for having taken the opportunity to look at what needs to be done to bring balance back into your life. And when you feel ready gently return to the room.

Collage of Gratitude Insights

Time of Sharing

Communion:

We come to the table seeking deep relationship with one another and with Spirit, in an effort to gain the wisdom needed to function in the material world. Our bodies because they are temporary urge us to seek beyond our dualistic world for wholeness. Our spiritual growth depends on this journey.

The common elements on our table this morning, bread, oil, and vinegar are gifts of Mother Earth. When we take them into our bodies, we take in some of the sun, the rain and the earth that nurtured and sustained *them*. It is the nature of our existence in the material world that we use these gifts of the earth for a time and then return all of them. Our elements both remind us and connect us to all that is or ever will be,

The bread symbolizes the earth's bounty so visible at this time of year. It blesses us with life. Without this sustenance we would perish. What a blessing that we live in such abundance. Let us not take it for granted.

The fruit of the vine we pass in the cup reminds us that life is a joy to be treasured. Without it our lives would be sadder. Joy brings balance to the challenges of life.

Take and eat in recognition of our eternal and perfect wholeness.

Benediction:

O Breath of Life, fill us, transform with your liberating breath. Free us from the things that keep us tied *to only what we know*. Reveal to us the things that hinder, those things that keep us from being a blessing in the lives of others: resentment, fear, apathy and greed. Help us to release self-criticism and discouragement. Empty us so that there may be a beautiful new space within for renewal in the next season of growth. So be it. Amen.

(Adapted from *The Circle of Life*)

Song Purify

Unity Feast: Together we bless and enjoy the gifts of the harvest table.

We rejoice in our connections, with the Divine Light that shines, on and through everyone and with each other we affirm the law of Unity that forms our bond of kinship as children of the Divine Life.