

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

## ***A Celebration of the Autumn Equinox***

### **Preparation:**

*Ask each person to bring a votive candle to the ritual. Have another candle in the center. Sit in a circle. In the center place a few autumn leaves and twigs. Each individual should have a votive candle in front of them.*

**Leader:** Let's take a moment and think about these three things:

1. What am I grateful for in my life?
2. What things do I want to bring into my life?
3. What things do I want to release from my life?

**(Pause)**

### **Leader :**

The Autumn Equinox is celebrated when day and night are of equal duration. The date corresponds to the center of the Sun crossing the celestial equator moving southward. It is also based on the day closest to the first day of Autumn (September 21st) when night and day are nearly of the same length and, it marks the first day of Autumn. Translated literally, equinox means "equal night." Because the sun is positioned above the equator, day and night are about equal in length all over the world during the equinox.

### **Reader 1:**

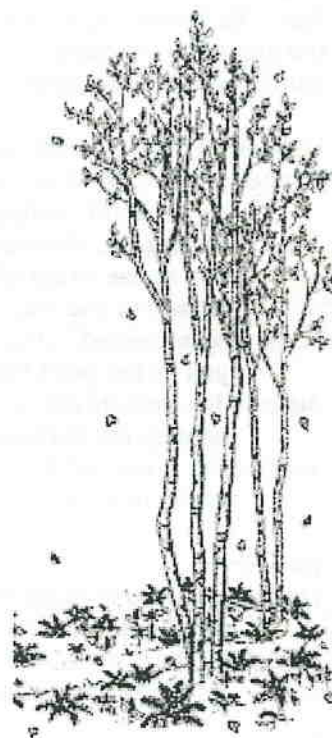
For thousands of years we planetary pilgrims have welcomed the sacred event of the Autumn Equinox with fires, songs and celebrations. Day equals night and light balances darkness, as this season of completion and contentment begins.

### **Reader 2:**

In Spring, our ancestors bowed in expectant wonder before a fertile Mother Earth about to become the rich womb out of which would rise a harvest of life. But in Fall, Maiden Earth becomes an old woman, withered and spent by Summer's growth.

### **Reader 3:**

Our primal parents' celebrations of yellowed Autumn's harvest was tinged with fear. In their anxiety they wondered if their food supplies would last through the long winter. Might evil spirits, envious of their warm comfort and well-stocked cupboards come and attack them? The sacred fires of this season were to purge away evil, to banish the fears of winter hidden behind the horizon.



**Reader 4:**

Yet Old Woman Autumn held the secret of life even in withered old age. The last sheaf of grain to be harvested from the fire contained her ageless spirit. It was carried into the home so that the Old Woman of Vegetation, the Grandmother of Green Energy, might live through the dreaded Winter months.

**Reader 5:**

The season of colorful leaves, Autumn is a time for thanksgiving. Autumn, your celebration of the harvest and the crowning of human achievement, rich textbook of wisdom, teach me to not take anything for granted but to be grateful for all.

**ALL:**

Wise Old Woman, teach me to take stock of the darkness within me and to acknowledge the great store of good that is also within. Teach me to balance the light and the dark as our earth now is a balance of day and night.

**Leader:** (light the center candle)

Dance with delight, O flame of autumn fire,  
as the earth, spinning and leaning away from the sun,  
begins to cool from the summer heat,  
and speak to me of the promise  
hidden in this season of autumn.

For spring is seeded in this season of completion,  
just as the giant oak exists in the acorn.

Autumn fire, orange and yellow sacrament of the sun,  
light up the darkness with your dancing.

Your power is seeded in the ripeness  
of the fruit and grain of this harvest season.

**Reader 1:**

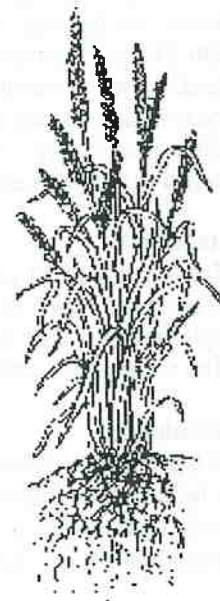
I greet you, child of night, my anger;  
May I live with you in a creative way.  
Be fuel for the prophet within me  
To speak and act against the darkness of injustice.

**Reader 2:**

I greet you, daughter of the dark, my sexual needs  
May I always dance with you in creative, selfless ways.  
May I live with you in openness and without fear.

**Reader 3:**

I greet you, sons of darkness, envy and the need to be noticed,  
I fear you not,  
for you can teach me how I must love myself fully  
if I am to love others and my God with all my heart.



**Reader 4:**

I greet you, night-spirit of aggression;  
    May you be a powerful force for good in my life.  
You are the energy that can impel me to achieve great deeds,  
    To heal the earth of brokenness;  
    May I live in healthiness with you.

**ALL:**

And may all my friends of the dark  
    Be in harmony with the spirits of light within me,  
    Living together under the loving eye of God.

**Leader:**

Let's take a few minutes to meditate on the center candle flame.  
Focus on thoughts and feelings of abundance. While you are thinking about things you are grateful for, you might also wish to consider the people in your life that are grateful towards you, for the things you have done. Recognize that gratitude is a gift that keeps on giving, and that counting one's blessings is an important thing to do because it reminds us of how truly fortunate we are.

*Beginning with one person at the table, a person lights their candle and says one thing that they are thankful for. After everyone has had a chance to light their candle and share one thing, then everyone continues calling out things that they are thankful for all together at once. Feel the abundance!*

**Psalm — Recite antiphonally**

Side 1: It is God's love that warms me in the sun  
    and God's love that sends the cold rain.

Side 2: *It is God's love that feeds me in the bread I eat  
    and God that feeds me also by hunger and fasting.*

Side 1: It is the love of God that sends the winter days when I am cold and sick,  
    and the hot summer when I labor and my clothes are full of sweat:

Side 2: *But it is God Who breathes on me with light winds off the river  
    and in the breezes out of the wood.  
    God's love spreads the shade of the sycamore over my head.*

Side 1: It is God's love that speaks to me in the birds and streams;  
    but also behind the clamor of the city God speaks to me  
    and all these things are seeds sent to me from God's will.

Side 2: *If these seeds would take root in my liberty,  
    and if God's will would grow from my freedom,*

Side 1: I would become the love God is,  
    and my harvest would be His glory and my own joy.

Side 2: *And I would grow together with thousands and millions of other freedoms  
    into the gold of one huge field praising God,  
    loaded with increase, loaded with wheat.*

**ALL:** Sing or recite together (to the tune of All Good Gifts from Godspell)

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land.  
But it is fed and watered by Her loving hand.  
She sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

**CHORUS:**

**All good gifts around us  
Have come from our Mother Earth,  
Then thank Her now, O thank Her now,  
With love and joy and mirth.**

We thank You then, O Mother, For all things bright and good,  
The seedtime and the harvest, Our life, our health, our food.  
No sacrifice You ask for, For all Your love imparts,  
For You are our great Mother, Your love is in our hearts.

**CHORUS:**

**All good gifts around us  
Have come from our Mother Earth,  
Then thank Her now, O thank Her now,  
With love and joy and mirth.**

***Prepared by Karen Cassidy CoL,  
for the Loretto Earth Network***

**Acknowledgements:**

- *Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim: A Personal Manual for Prayer and Ritual*, Edward Hayes, 1989
- Celebrating the Autumn Equinox, [care2.com/green living](http://care2.com/green_living)
- *Godspell*, 1999
- *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton, 1962

**Questions for further thought:**

How do I create and maintain balance in my life?  
Looking closely at the balance in my life, what needs to be shifted or changed?  
How do I balance my personal needs with my commitments to the outside world?  
How do I receive? How do I give?  
How do I hold on to that which is no longer beneficial in my life?

