*Another un-cited article in our binder, this reading includes history as well as a ritual to raise the energies associated with Aphrodite, “sacred passion, burning desire, sensual ecstasy, mother of pleasure”.*

**Aphrodite (Summer Solstice)**

**…*And She dances and spins toward summer, to the beat of Her passion’s drum…***

 Holy day honors the mysteries and passions of Aphrodite, Goddess of Love. The Goddess has been born and grown to womanhood, and now encounters her Divine lover. She undergoes the death and rebirth of self that occurs when merging with another. She is impregnated or made fertile with future creations, be they flesh or ?, human or divine, political, practical, artistic or social. This fertilization can be seen as self-made, community-made, or mutually created by the Lovers. Her lover can be a woman, a man, herself, her work or the Goddess. Loving couples or groups may wish to have special blessings today. This is a time of ecstasy and surrender.

 Even as the sexual tides of our bodies rise and fall, so do the larger life tides of magnetic energy caused by the interplay of darkness and light. Aligning ourselves with energy waves-sexual, lunar, earthly, solar, magnetic and so on-this is what the ritual is all about. Many cultures and mythologies acknowledge the magnetic pull and reversals of these energy waves. They become personalized deities, and often are seen as lovers. It is now known that plants are literally excited by the presence of lovers in their vicinity, and this stimulates their growth. Rituals of an orgiastic nature are widespread in the ancient world, practiced for their ability to fertilize or amplify this process in nature.

 Since this is the twentieth century and we are a product of our times, I have not designed a ritual that includes open lovemaking. Many people are not ready for this and no one should have to feel pressured into it, though this is a matter of discretion within individual groups. The most important thing is to acknowledge and affirm Aphrodite in our lives.

 AS the heterosexual model of sexual love and reproduction became dominant, the divine lovers, male and female, ascended in mythology and religion. In the druidic faith the goddess received her divine consort at certain times of the year. Consecrated priests and priestesses made love in the plowed furrows of the fields as a ritual sacrament to the furthering of life. Many ancient royal marriages were consummated publicly so that the word could go out that life was assured symbolically through the mystery of their union. Among the Celts a poet often achieved his greatness through his passion for the Muse-goddess in the form of a human woman.

 Now that we know about parthenogenesis, we can envision a universe of more variation. The ecstatic waves of passion can in themselves be understood as a mysterious and miraculous life force. These waves are kundalini or shakti in motion. They are aroused through chemical and spiritual magnetism between beings. When flowing powerfully they result in a union of forces that gives birth to something or someone new. Aphrodite is a mythopoetic name for this primordial natural process. She appears between women, men, men and women, old and young, rich and alike. Aphrodite is one of the most potent forces in our lives. Passionate love between people engenders great creations, ideas, revolutions, babies, poems and causes.

 It now makes sense in our enlightened century to re-mythologize the passionate magnetic climaxes of the year, so that any arrangement of gender is possible and sacred. Since the mysteries of women loving women have been buried so long and the practice of women’s mysteries along with it, I have chosen to create a ritual that celebrates these in particular, for it is here that ht need is greatest. My theory is that in reinstating these practices we will restore balance and health to the planet.

 This ritual, therefore, is for women of any sexual preference, but who support woman love, practice it in some form , or wish to do so.

 Sexual passion is a wild force of nature that has its own rhythms and laws. Attempts to cage Aphrodite or pin down the magical ecstasies of lovers will result in Her departure. Therefore in this ritual we also celebrate the free wild spirit of Aphrodite, or woman’s ability to bask in Her fires, yet keep her virginity and selfhood.

 Come together outdoors, preferably by the ocean, Aphrodite’s legend and birthplace. Festoon the altar with roses of every shade. Burn rose incense, and yourselves with rose scent. Have a bowl of consecrated rosewater on the altar. Burn red candles for passion, in red glass to keep out the wind, and garlands or roses for all to wear. Wear the clothes that make you feel the most beautiful. (Also place a bowl of red wine with roses and strawberries bloating therein.)

 Make a fire pit in the center of the ritual circle area by scooping out the sand and ringing it with rocks. Mix dried rose branches in with the firewood.

 Prepare sensuous foods: avocados, mushrooms, rose ice cream, melted chocolate dishes, mangoes, whipped cream on fruit, red wine, rich sauces, etc.

 Join hands, cast the circle, and chant love goddesses’ names: Aphrodite, Astarte, Inanna, and others.

 The Priestess lights the altar candles, saying:

 With this flame we ignite the spirit of Aphrodite

 Goddess of passion and love

 Great is the magic of Aphrodite

 Who brings us joy and ecstasy

 Great is the mystery of Aphrodite

 Who brings us union, separation, and reunion

 Great is the love of Aphrodite

 Who brings inspiration to all the world

 Hail Aphrodite!

 All Hail Aphrodite!

Each woman lights a branch of rosewood at the altar and uses to light the fire in the center of the circle. Chant simultaneously:

 In the forest on my knees

 Breaking brittle bones of trees

 O Mother

 I feel thee

 Raising up the breath of fire

 Thy wondrous gift of true desire

 Surrender, I now to thee…

One priestess opens the circle and leads the group dancing to the water’s edge. The priestess remains behind to tend the fires. Each woman is ritually undressed and birth in the ocean. All proclaim her beauty and sacred womanhood. She is dressed and crowned with a garland of roses. The first woman to be bathed returns to the circle and trades places with the one who remained, so that she may also be ritually bathed. All then return to the circle and take their seats.

Priestess reads aloud a sacred pact to Aphrodite:

 Aphrodite

 Magnificent Goddess

 Life force

 Sacred passion

 Burning desire

 Sensual ecstasy

 Mother of pleasure

 We choose to live our lives that we may know thee

 To welcome thine embrace

 And cherish all true lovers

 Through all time

 To honor the depth of feeling

 You awaken in us

 And always to keep our hearts open