

harvests. This is a time to give thanks to the goddess for her many blessings and celebrate the gifts life brings. We also celebrate the heat of the waxing sun as we approach her sign, Leo. Sunny weather brings us out of doors, into the light of everyday. We are seen, known in our communities, coming together for projects of work and play. Since patriarchy has designated the sun as male, we note an increase of aggression and competition at this time. During the in-between-times when sacred kings were sacrificed to the goddess, the symbol of male surrender to the female principle was considered important to the survival of all. In modern times it is appropriate to represent this surrender more gently, but represent it we must, as we seek the softening, nourishing influence of female energy to temper and enhance the boldness of the male energies.

In this day and age there are truly many things to be thankful for. As women many of us have incredible numbers of choices: We can marry or not, have children or not, seek careers, live alone or not, develop our potentials. In this age of information and growth, many more of us have access to choices that were not always available in the past. We are continually exposed to streams of knowledge coming to us through media, through literature, art, and word-of-mouth. This indeed is a kind of abundance that we sometimes overlook.

In realizing our abundance, we must also come to terms with the different levels of privilege that still exist in the world. Not everyone has as much freedom. Those of who live in the U.S. often have great material privilege as well. Habondia's day is a good time to reflect on issues of privilege and class: to send energy and support to those who have less than we, to give thanks and appreciation for that which we do have, to invoke increase with our magic as needed for ourselves and others, to pray for the end of hunger and homelessness in the world and the dissolving of all such inequities. Issues of class have been known to divide sisters, and are a great handicap in building a cohesive movement for change. Let Lammas be a time for communication on these issues, for weeding out our hatred toward those who have (for all should have, and having does not make us bad), or our contempt for those who have not (for many are lacking and this in no way means we are inferior or unimportant.) Privileged sisters can teach us their strength, their willingness to deserve, to take good care of themselves. Women of less privilege can teach us their openness, their ability to care and be loyal, to survive in adversity, to act in community. Together we can step out of the patriarchal staircase of hierarchy and power-over, and end the severance of the aspects of our natures that keep us alienated and afraid of each other. Economic class issues are pivotal in any realistic attempt toward world change. Failure to address these will lead to a dead end and no change at all.

Other themes that are appropriate on this summer holyday are animal spirit and the playfulness of the child-self. This ritual includes a ceremony to honor totem animal guides and our kinship with all the creatures of nature. I suggest games be played after the circle is opened to let the child self come out in expression.

Hold this ritual at dawn, out of doors in a grassy meadow, with a good view of eastern horizon where the sun will rise. Prepare the altar the day before. Decorate with fruits and vegetables of the harvest, an image of the goddess as the abundant all-One, and musical instruments to be played as the sun rises (drums, bells, flutes, etc.). Make a firepit in the center of the ritual circle area and pre-lay the firewood, ready for lighting. Also set up next to the firepit a vessel of water and a vessel of soft earth. Each woman cuts a length of branch to represent the male energy in her life. Place a basket with a good supply of dried sage.

Make summer foods: fruit and vegetable salads, flower salads. Fruit can be washed and laid out on platters in beautiful mandala patterns; also vegetables can be prepared this way. It would be helpful to have a house near the meadow for storage and safekeeping of pre-made dishes. If you are out in the wilderness, prepare the foods after the ritual.

Camp out for the night, so that all will be together to greet and "sing in" the dawn. As the sky lightens, all take a ritual bath in a lake or stream nearby (if this is possible). Dress in light summer clothing: rainbow colors, lots of body paint, nudity, bells on wrists and ankles, etc.

All assemble and sit in circle, as the first bright edge of the solar disk appears. Have instruments in your laps, ready to use. All hold hands. A priestess lights the altar candles, another lights the fire. All watch and listen in perfect silence to the symphony of dawn. When Sola is one-third risen all raise their voices and sing Her names: Anaharasu, Lucina, Inanna, Sola, Akewa . . . letting your voices swell and grow as the light grows, adding drum beats, bells and other sounds as desired.

When the sun is completely risen, the priestess speaks:

Hail goddess of the sun
Hail Mother who loves us with all-pervading heat
Hail Habondia who pours her cornucopia upon the earth
Hail Gaia, Earth Mother, who births all creatures

She takes up the bowl of sliced fruits, saying:

This is the body that promises sustenance
The sacred flesh of our Mother
Eat and be filled, my sisters

She turns to the first woman in the circle and feeds her from the bowl. This woman then takes the bowl and turns to feed the next woman, and so on until all in the circle have been fed. The last woman returns the bowl to the altar.

A priestess says this spell for abundance:

O Habondia, great is thy bounty

Endless are the streams of thine abundance
We call upon you now to nourish us
And those around the world who are in need
Teach us to receive and know that we deserve
Teach us to give and share the overflow . . .

Women call out from around the circle their requests and visions of abundance:
"I see myself with showers of money pouring down upon me," "I see my friend with
a happy home," "I see a hungry child eating her fill," "I see . . . etc." All affirm and
support each vision: "So be it. Blessed be. That which we have seen and said shall
come to be. As we wish it, so shall it be . . . etc."

All sing:

We are the daughters of the moon
We are the sisters of the sun
We are the mothers of the earth
We are women, we are one
(Repeat to taste.)

The rattle is passed to each woman who wishes to share her stories of
experience within herself or in life, whether positive or negative. Be free to share
and all oppressions that need to be purged and healed.

A priestess takes up her branch and holds it up to the sky, saying:

Once the goddess birthed only Her Self
And that which we have come to know as male
Was contained within Her
Then it came to pass that the male grew separate
And came forth as Her Divine Son and Lover
All was well while He loved Her
But then He changed, and the world changed with Him
Turning away from the Mother in jealousy and fear
Forgetting his source and sustenance
His eyes turned only upward as He forgot
Or raped the earth from which He came
Causing Himself and many sisters much suffering.
Now is the time for Him to grow up
And take his place in the natural order
And so on this day we seek to heal the split between male
and female
To bring us back into harmony and peace once more . . .

She plunges the branch into the fire, the water, and the earth. Each woman in the circle does the same with her branch, taking time to speak of any men in her life, or of aspects of her own nature that may be male identified. Each sends healing, enlightenment, etc. Finally all take the branches once more and burn them completely in the fire, chanting and dancing around the circle together:

Let the patriarch be no more
Let the sons and lovers return
Let all men know true magic
Let both women and men be mothers
And in the fires of passion burn . . .
(Repeat until all branches have burned up)

A priestess takes up the basket of dried sage, saying:

I greet my totem animal spirit guide, the cat
(Or snake, or whatever creature she feels is her ally)
And make this offering
Let our sister and brother creatures be honored always . . .

She throws some of the sage into the fire and passes the basket on to the next woman. Each woman does the same for her totem animal, until the circle is completed.

All howl, yip, squeal, chirp, meow, etc., beating drums and ringing bells . . .

Celebration of choices: A priestess begins with phrases such as, "I celebrate the freedom in my life," or "I celebrate my children," "I celebrate my lovers," "I celebrate my solitude," "I celebrate my independence," etc. Women take up the chant, calling out their celebrations until all have given thanks.

Priestess: Praises and thanks to the goddess
For all she has given

All: Praises and thanks to the goddess
For all she has given

Priestess: Praises and thanks be to women
For all they have given

All: Praises and thanks be to women
For all they have given

Praises be to the earth, children, old ones, etc.

A moment of silence and meditation.

All rise and put their arms 'round one another in the circle, swaying and singing together:

Mother goddess keep me whole
Let thy beauty fill my soul
Maiden goddess keep me whole
Let thy power fill my soul
Crone goddess keep me whole
Let thy wisdom fill my soul . . .
(Repeat and flow with it, let voices fly and soar,
sing it in a round, enjoy . . .)

Priestess: Let the circle be opened
And the feasting begin!

Persephone
(Autumn Equinox)

*. . . And She dances and spins toward darkness all dressed in autumn fire
To descend to the time of shadow, and rest from the world's desire . . .*

The Year Goddess approaches her Crone time now, as the nights begin to lengthen and the days to shorten once more. We feel her bite, the crispness of the air, the brightness of the moon. Pomegranates and nuts ripen. Storehouses are stocked with the harvest. Demeter yields Her daughter to the underworld. Kore descends to become Persephone, to confront the inevitability of death, change, and separation. This is a time of both mourning and joy, as we face the darkness and look back over the year we have just lived. For many witches this begins the most powerful time of the year—the dark time when the sun's light recedes to give more focus to the moon and the deep self of the female principle. As Kore must separate from the world and her Mother for a time, so must each of us undergo this mystery in our lives. Rituals of grieving are appropriate now, as well as acknowledging the rebirth and joy that follow.

The separation between mother and daughter, and that between lovers, is the dominant theme of this time. We are in deep need of rituals that help us through these transitions. Many daughters never achieve a full sense of self, remaining dependent and frustrated all of their lives. Many mothers never fully let go of their children. Both are caught and cannot grow to their reunion as equal adults. Most lovers must undergo a closing ceremony when their passions end. Often splits continue to cause anger and hurt for many years. Because of the fear of death and endings, grief is frequently suppressed, and so continues to drain and sicken us indefinitely. "The way out is the way through." We cannot reach rebirth if we cannot allow for death. We know neither life nor death, but a kind of stasis that is void of movement.