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Midsummer Solstice (June 21)

This solstice marks the sun’s maximum height in the sky, making it the longest day of the year. The themes of a solstice festival at this time are light and warmth. Pagans used to signify such themes with Midsummer bonfires. Young men and women leaped over the flames. Old wives claimed that the summer’s grain crops would grow as high as the leapers were able to jump; so they exerted themselves as much as they could, for the benefit of the crops.

As was done for Vernal Equinox, prepare this Antiphonal Chant:

N: What is this night?

S: It is the night of the Midsummer Solstice.

E: What is the meaning of this night?

W: It is a peak of power.

N: What is the element that rules this night?

S: Tonight the light reaches the limit of its power over darkness.

E: After this night of power, what is the element that will wane?

W: From this night forward, the light will wane and the darkness will grow.

N: How do we recognize ourselves on this night?

S: We greet the sun and glory in the light.

E: Who helps us?

N: Our Goddess helps us.

N: What is our Goddess?

S: She is the brilliant fire of heaven, the living heat, the world’s golden noontides.

E: Who is our Goddess?

W: She is the Virgin of Light, the Crone of Darkness, the Mother of Time.

N: Where is our Goddess?

S: She is in our hearts in all seasons of the turning year.

E: Who is our Goddess?

W: Behold, she is ourselves.

Since the weather is usually warm at this time, groups might like to plan an outdoor ceremony even if most meetings are indoors. If a place is found suitable for building a bonfire, participants might want to try the fire-leaping ceremony. Of course, this should be done with care. The fire must be kept under control. Indoors, a modest symbolic hop over a candle might do well enough.

Decorations may be large, round, ostentatious: sun discs with radiant rays, circles cut from foil, coins or medallions, gilded plates, crystal balls, sunflowers. Lights, crystals, lenses, prisms and other symbols of clarity are appropriate. Participants might dress up like queens in royal purple and gold, with lots of jewelry; or, if the weather is hot, they might dress down in as little as possible, or even in nothing at all.

The festival of light is a good time for figure-8 dances that express the turning of the year’s cycles, and for invoking various versions of the Sun Goddess (Sul, Atthar, Aditi, Glory-of-Elves). It’s a good time for positive energy, for making resolutions and vows that require inner strength. It’s a good time to draw up rules to live by, or to review the Laws of the Goddess. Symbols of aspiration may be placed on the altar, or passed around the circle for supportive comments.

Guided meditations for this season should emphasize courage, intellectual competence, heroine figures, female rulers, self-confidence, and a direct, effective approach to problems. Openness, reason, and willingness to engage in frank, free communication are desirable. Blockages caused by imaginary fears should be faced and exorcised. The themes of light and clarity may be developed by any ritual means that the group might prefer.