

Walking Our Talk:

the Seasons Between the Sabbats

by Judy Harrow

"Jack, do you never sleep? Does the Green stay around deep in your heart?
Or do these modern times, motorways, powerlines, keep us apart?
Well, I don't think so. I saw some grass growing through the pavement today!"
song lyric from *Jack in the Green*. on the Jethro Tull album, *Songs from the Woods*.

What we do in our Circles is, to the best of our understanding and ability, *religion*. We proudly claim our rights of religious freedom and insist on appropriate respect from members of all the other religions around us. But what exactly are we claiming? What does it mean to be or to practice a religion?

The word religion comes from a Latin word, *ligere*, which is also the root of "ligament" and "link." So religion, re-linking, means an activity that restores a connection. What connection? Several, actually, but the most important is the connection between us and our Gods. Or, if you prefer to say it another way, between the Sacred, the Otherworld, the Dreaming, and our most everyday, ordinary lives.

In some views, this connection can never be interrupted, and so it need never be restored. The Gods are ever-present (*Omnipresens* was one of the classical Greek epithets for Athena). Were they not ever-present, we could not live. The only thing that can change is our conscious awareness of Their presence, our conscious connection with Them. In this view, religion is the way we establish, sustain, or restore our *awareness* of that unbreakable connection. Although the connection itself gives us life, the awareness gives that life value, meaning, power and beauty. Religion is worth doing.

So, what we do is religion. It is also participatory performance art, a social support group, and a cheap, safe, legal way of exploring altered states of consciousness. All of those are good things, but none of them is the main purpose of the exercise. Not even magic, the ability to change our consciousness, and perhaps even the world around us, through the skilled exercise of will, is the main purpose of the exercise. Religion - creating, sustaining, deepening and clarifying our conscious connection with the Gods - is the primary reason why we gather together. All the rest is bonus.

Take careful note of this: if what we do in Circle does not gradually come to permeate, empower and guide every part of our lives, including our everyday, ordinary activities, it may be thoroughly enjoyable, even useful, but it just ain't religion. Religion connects.

Now, to get more specific, our particular religion is, at its heart and core, nature mysticism. Within a broad polytheistic framework, our primary devotion is given to Mother Earth. So, if anything, developing our awareness of the connection between the Sacred and the everyday is

even more intrinsic to our spiritual development than it is to the spiritual practice of more transcendence-based religions. Our quest is to perceive and experience the Sacred on this Earth, in these bodies, right here and right now. If our spirituality is real, it cannot be restricted to the Sabbats and the Moons, or to the times when we gather together in the Circle between the Worlds.

So we do well to explore how Pagan, nature-oriented spirituality might both arise from, and shape and guide, our daily lives in the seasons that lie between the Sabbats - what we have come to describe as the "pie slices" of the Wiccan *Wheel of the Year*. Here are some preliminary suggestions. Please use them to reflect on how our annual cycle plays out in your life. Please work with the activities and exercises they present to build a stronger connection. We would appreciate any additions, corrections, comments of any kind.

One more caution: our Pagan forbears lived by the changing seasons and the cycles of the land. Their rituals intertwined closely with the rhythms of everyday life. Most of us are urban, professional, our workaday lives far removed from field, flock and forest. Accordingly, we face a much more complex challenge: keeping ourselves and our spirituality in relationship with both the Earth's cycles and our own everyday experiences.

So beware of Uncle Wicca! I once wandered down that sidetrack for a full year. This is how it happened. Daystar, the infamous founding High Priest of Proteus, was a farm kid from Indiana. His dad was a tractor mechanic, his grandparents and uncles were all family farmers. He grew up cornfed, helping out on all their farms. At the time Proteus was getting started, most of these farms were still in active operation. So, as each Sabbat approached for that first year, I would ask Daystar, "what are your uncles doing about now?" And from that, we would design a ritual.

Get that? For a full year, we celebrated a religion that was about the life rhythms of Daystar's uncles -- Uncle Wicca. Possibly even worse than Sabbat Wicca, because we honestly thought we were connecting our faith with real life. And we were, just somebody else's real life instead of our own.

Older and hopefully wiser now, we try to shape our ritual practice so that it both reflects and empowers our own daily life at home, in the streets, in the workplace, helping us to live in accordance with our core values, helping us to be aware of the Sacred presence that is always within and around us, helping us to walk our talk in every action of our lives, and to do it better with every cycle of the Sun and Moon.

So mote it be!

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