

**Issue 4: Beltane 2008**

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## **Beltane**

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The ancient Celts called this holiday Beltane and began celebrating at sunset on April 30th. It marked the beginning of summer, the time to move with the flocks up to the summer pastures. Other names for May Day include: Cetsamhain ('opposite Samhain'), Walpurgisnacht (in Germany), and Roodmas.

In Germany, April 30th is Walpurgisnacht, the night when it was believed that witches flew on their brooms to mountaintop gatherings where they danced all night around bonfires. Like Halloween, this is a night when witches, fairies and ghosts wander freely. The veil between the worlds is thin. The Queen of the Fairies rides out on a snow-white horse, looking for mortals to lure away to Fairyland for seven years. Folklore says that if you sit beneath a tree on this night, you will see Her or hear the sound of Her horse's bells as She rides by. If you hide your face, She will pass you by but if you look at Her, She may choose you.

Many May Day customs involve flowers and green branches. Flowers are woven into wreaths to exchange as gifts between lovers or to hang on doors as decoration. Hawthorn is particularly auspicious since it begins blooming when the weather is warm enough for planting. Anyone who went out into the woods and found a branch of flowering hawthorn would bring it triumphantly into the village and announcing the start of planting season. However there were warnings about bringing hawthorn into the house, since it would invite the fairies in.

The Maypole is a symbol with many meanings. Often celebrated as and considered a phallic symbol, it also resembles the garlanded trees associated with moon goddesses. In the Phrygian rites of Attis, celebrated around the spring equinox, a fir

tree was chopped down, wrapped in a shroud and placed in a tomb. Resurrected three days later, it was decorated and danced around. In some places, May Day ceremonies took place beneath a sacred tree, which was not uprooted. These trees represented the world-tree, the axis between heaven and earth. The Maypole dance is a round dance of alternating male and female dancers, weaving in and out, plaiting ribbons as they go. Maypole dances fulfilled social and sacred functions. They helped people flirt and mingle socially and they also raised energy.

Bring the May into your life by bringing home green branches, flowers and branches of flowering trees. Transform your house into a bower by making a wreath to hang on the door or to crown your version of the Goddess. This is a time for giving gifts. Gather flowers with special messages for friends and relatives. Make up your own explanation of the meaning of each flower and give it along with the bouquet. For friends at a distance, send pressed flowers or May Day cards or packets of flower seeds.

If you can, stay up all night, preferably outdoors. At least go for a walk in the night on April 30th and listen for the bells that herald the approach of the Fairy Queen. And you can run around, under cover of darkness, leaving May baskets of flowers on doorsteps. On the first of May, wear your most colourful clothes or dress all in green (the colour of the fairies). Consider wearing a flower in your hair.

Treat yourself like a Goddess. Take a long luxurious bath in scented water. Anoint yourself with oils. Crown yourself with flowers. Indulge yourself. Sip your May wine. Honor your sexual choices. In your journal, recall the times when sex was magical, when you felt alluring or you fell in love. Write about smoldering glances, the times your body caught fire, the sweetness of a first kiss or caress. If you have a partner, celebrate sex as a sacred activity. Make the time you spend together and the space you inhabit special. Light candles or strew the bed with rose petals. Notice how

your lover represents the God or Goddess to you. This is the time to celebrate attraction and pleasure.

<http://www.schooloftheseasons.com/mayday.html>

*Lila is a student of [The Sacred Three Goddess school](#).*

## **The Goddess**

Centuries ago, the Goddess was cut from our lives, but not our hearts. Even when we did not know we sought her, our hearts yearned for her. We loved the commercials that made reference to the Goddess, even the Venus razor commercials. We looked for the Goddess in every face we saw, in every commercial, in every billboard ad, and yes, in every book. Yet, we attacked every young girl who wore her skirt too short. We decided she looked too sexy for us, and she should not dress like that.

Why are we at such odds with ourselves? Why does our social class system seek her, and shun her in the next breath?

Many centuries ago, our spiritual world took an ominous turn. Up until then, our ancestors lived their lives by the ebb and flow of the moon, and the circle of seasons that regulated our planet. They knew the flow of her. They understood the flow of time, and the circle by which she brought life forward, and the quiet of which she pulled life back.

Our ancestors had learned to live their lives side-by-side, in harmony with nature. It was no wonder, then, that they tried to live their lives in harmony with the church. For a while, things went on in perfect peace, but then, things began to change.

Now, where the wise old woman brought ease to the suffering people, she was suddenly something to be demonized. Clergy sought these women out, and put them up for trial. The only ease that could be had from the torture applied to them was to confess, but confess to what. Confess that they worshiped a false god? Confess that they had been led astray by demons?

The very first woman to be hunted down may have been Mary Magdalene herself. The Catholic Church had access to the scrolls and chose the ones that would be known today in the Catholic bible. Nine men were sent to the caves to interpret the scrolls. If one died, he was replaced. Many of the scrolls were discarded as not being part of God's word. When Jesus died, Mary Magdalene herself became something to be hunted. Perhaps she was even sought, in the very first vestiges, of what the church had branded witch.

Yet, the Goddess did not die, though thousands, upon thousands, of women did. The Goddess lived on in our hearts. Our yearning for her healing love has lived on in our hearts. She lived through us, and now, we live in a time when she comes through to all once more. Perhaps the Priestesses of Avalon will walk freely once more to build Shrines to the Goddess open to all to seek her, once again.

*Shalimar is a student with Sisters in Celebration.*

## **Gaia's Sanctuary**

The word "sanctuary" means a place of safety, frequently one that has been dedicated in some way as sacred space.

My garden is my sanctuary. Since it's about a five-minute drive from my house, I have a distinct advantage over those who have them attached to their homes: there are no cell phones, no telephones, no doorbells, and I have our only vehicle. It's extremely difficult for anyone to interrupt me when I'm there, and for that I am very grateful. In my garden, I can get away from all the stress and noise of my life, and just BE.

But it's not just MY sanctuary. Over time, my garden plot, which is formally dedicated to Gaia, has become a sanctuary to all sorts of creatures that are regularly chased out of other people's gardens, such as birds, lizards, field mice, and grasshoppers. For a while, there was an entire mouse family living under the bird bath, with their front door directly under the bird seed dish! They know they are safe within my fences because I have made my plot a haven for them. I put in the bird bath, a sunning stone for the lizards, and regularly leave seeds and other munchies out for these creatures, and I have been rewarded with all sorts of "gifts" in return: a dove's egg left next to one of the mullein plants, a tiny mouse skull by the lavender, and a complete lizard skin under my soapwort. And some days, I may have 20 or more birds eating, drinking, bathing and fighting together – they are such a joy to watch!

The Goddess has truly blessed me by giving me the chance to spend time with these wonderful creatures, and at the same time I have the opportunity to give back to them a little of what She has given me, a safe haven from the cares and dangers of the world. Blessed be.

*"All things bright and beautiful,*

*All creatures great and small,*

*All things wise and wonderful,*

*The Goddess made them all."*

BellaDonna lives in Hayward, CA, where she runs a small eclectic coven. She is currently a Level I Initiate of [The Sacred Three Goddess School](#), and is working on Level II.

## **Summer Ritual**

This ritual can be as simple or ornate as you wish; you are the creatrix of your ceremony. The purpose of this celebration ritual is to express your joy for the fertility of Goddess and gratitude for life. This ritual is done in the bathroom! I have a very long counter space in my bathroom, so modify this as you wish. It is a fun ritual and inspires love for self. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did!

Items needed:

candles: White for Goddess, Green for God (optional) Pink or White for yourself.

flowers: anything blooming!

beverage: wine or non-alcoholic juice

luscious bath supplies: bath salt, bath gel, scrubbie (or loofah sponge)

incense: you can use any incense you like, but be sure not to overwhelm your senses in a small space.

eyeliner or lipstick: cheap ones that you don't mind using up!

oil or lotion: your favorite, of course!

Ritual:

Arrange your candles and flowers in your bathroom, creating a celebratory space. Bring your beverage with you and place it on the side of your tub. Light incense.

Run your tub, adding your bath salts or Epsom salts. You also may add essential oils if you like. When the bath is ready, light your candles and call your circle. You may invite Goddess to join you, or both Goddess and God if you wish. Remove the incense to another room. I take it to the bedroom to prepare for dream time.

Get into the tub and soak. Imagine all of your stresses coming off of your body as you scrub and enjoy your drink. Stay in as long as you wish, giving gratitude to Goddess and Her gifts of abundance and fertility.

Dry off with your favorite fluffy towel. Stand in front of your mirror. Take your lipstick or eyeliner and draw symbols on your body. With each symbol you draw, say things to yourself such as, "I love you", "bless my body", "Goddess is Love", etc. Be creative. I also like to write these things on my body.

If you have a full mirror (or even if you don't), stand in front of it (or your regular mirror, looking at your face) and do a body blessing, touching each part of your body as you speak blessings. Here is mine if you need one:

## **Body Blessing**

*Goddess, bless my mind,*

*That I may think on you.*

*Bless my eyes,*

*That I may see the beauty around me.*

*Bless my throat,*

*That I may speak my truth.*

*Bless my heart,*

*That love may flow unconditionally.*

*Bless my hands,*

*That I may give in your name.*

*Bless my stomach,  
That I may feel content.*

*Bless my genitals,  
That I may know I am a sensual being.*

*Bless my feet,  
That I may walk in your path.*

Finally, massage your favorite oil or lotion into your skin, and each area you cover, send it love and acceptance.

Open the circle and ground.

*Danu Gray-Wolf is an initiate of [Order of the White Moon](#) through Sisters in Celebration.*

**Lady Liberty**

Lady Liberty is the Goddess sacred to the people of the United States of America. She resides on a twelve-acre island (formerly Bedloe's Island and renamed Liberty Island in 1956) in New York harbour. Her full name is Liberty Enlightening the World. She was gifted to America by the people of France in the spirit of friendship and solidarity. She is seen as a universal symbol of freedom. Liberty faces South East, a welcome sight to the immigrants arriving by ship to this young country. She represents the dream of freedom newcomers are seeking. She is The Light of the World as Her torch of hope burns everlasting.

Liberty was originally a Roman Goddess, Libertas, the Goddess of personal freedom. She evolved into the Goddess of constitutional government and statehood. She wears the pileus cap (similar to a skull cap) that was symbolic of a freed slave. In ancient Rome, when a slave was freed by a master, a ceremony took place in which the former slave's hair was shorn and the pileus placed upon the shaved head (slaves had to go bareheaded so the cap is an important attribute). Slaves and former indentured look to Libertas as a symbol of their freedom. Other attributes of Libertas include the Laurel wreath, a spear and a torch. A cat may also lie at Her feet. The Feast day of Libertas is April 13 although December 10 is also sacred to Her. The Statue of Liberty's feast Day is October 28.

Lady Liberty is dressed in Roman robes and sandals. She wears a crown of seven rays representing the seven seas and seven continents of the world. There are 25 windows within the crown which represent the gemstones found on Earth. Her torch symbolizes enlightenment as She Lights the way to freedom, showing us all the path to liberty. In Her left hand, She holds a tablet upon which is written the date of American Independence, July 4, 1776. Liberty is not merely standing at attention in the harbour. Her right foot is raised as She moves forward, Her left foot tramples the broken shackles at Her feet. The broken chains symbolizing her freedom from oppression and servitude.

Liberty was designed by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel (designer of the Eiffel Tower) was commissioned to design the massive iron pylon and secondary skeletal framework which would hold the copper plates in place. Liberty stands 300 feet high and weighs 225 tons. The idea to erect a colossus statue first came to Bartholdi as he visited the newly created Suez Canal. That work was never commissioned and Bartholdi brought his statue to the United States instead. I'm certain many present day Americans could not imagine their country without this enduring symbol of personal freedom. As President Grover Cleveland remarked in 1886 " We will not forget that Liberty has here made Her home, nor shall Her chosen altar be neglected."

Liberty is a wonderful Goddess for the Women of America to pay homage to. Like the statue of Athena in the Parthenon of ancient Greece, Liberty commands respect and awe by Her sheer size alone. She becomes symbolic of every woman's struggle against oppression, we need only call to Her. As Selena Fox wrote, Lady Liberty is "...a powerful and ancient Goddess who can guide, inspire, protect, and comfort..." May She continue to shine Her beacon of Enlightenment upon us all.

[http://www.statueofliberty.org/default\\_sol.htm](http://www.statueofliberty.org/default_sol.htm)

<http://www.nps.gov/stli/>

*Lila is a student of [The Sacred Three Goddess school](#).*

## **OWM Awareness**

"Welcome to US."

Our sister Asherah said in welcome to a new sister, and I cried. I cried with love because it embraced a glorious place within my heart. I thought to myself, yes! US. We are US!

We are more than an online web presence, we are more than women scattered near and far communicating via discussion groups and internet e-mail. We are! And we are so much!

We have herstory, we have longevity, sisterhood, growth, learning, and we offer so much to the public and to members and students.

If you have ever read these amazing issues of Seasons of the Moon and wondered to yourself.....Who Are These Phenomenal Women?! You can find out more about who we are, what makes the Order of the White Moon a truly special and sacred place at : <http://orderwhitemoon.org/about/index.html>

Nessa CrescentMoon is a High Priestess, an Ordained Minister, General VP of the OWM, a founder of Sisters in Celebration.

## **OWM Happenings**

Greetings of Beltane to you all!

Thank you for your prayers for a fruitful board meeting! Our January meeting brought us wonderful strides in assisting to further develop the Order of the White Moon.

So, what's new?! Well, pull up a comfy chair sister all and I'll gladly share the news!

HP Kerritwyn of [The Sacred Three](#) and [Rainbow Moon](#) has stepped into the VP of Ordinations for the Order. We have recently congratulated two Priestesses and welcomed them High Priestess candidates... Etain, from Spiritual Pathways and Wren, from Daughters of the Greening; they are currently studying in Level 4.

What else?! Well, fundraising efforts continue on with great success. We are thrilled to have two new initiates who have become members of the Order. Congrats to Danu Gray-Wolf and Mystic Raven. Our preparations have begun for our annual gathering, we are excited to once again be getting together this year!

And oh!!! The President and Spiritual Head of the OWM....is getting married! We wish you many, many years of nuptial bliss!

*Nessa CrescentMoon is a High Priestess, an Ordained Minister, General VP of the OWM, a founder of Sisters in Celebration.*

## **Book Review**

"Wicca for Beginners", by Thea Sabin

This book went from me to my sister and then to my son. This book has a lot of information and stays on topic. I know that some herbal information and things are important, but this book gives all of the important concepts needing to be focused on as well as showing in what order they are most important to our practice.

Exercises are included in chapter three to help you learn to ground, visualize, and many others. The author feels it is important to be able to do these things before moving on in your practices. All of the information in this chapter is important as a basis for the rest of ones' training. One cannot continue without these abilities, they are the foundation of all practices in Wicca.

In closing, this book is easy to read, easy to follow and easy to understand. I give this book a good review because of all the insightful information included between these pages.

*Elana Cassairais is a student of [The Scared Three Goddess School](#).*

## **Bannock Recipe**

Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour

2tsp baking powder

1/4 Cup vegetable oil

1 1/2 Cup water

pinch of salt

raisins (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, salt, raisins, water and oil. Knead on a lightly floured surface for about 10 minutes. Let it rest for a minute, then spread out onto a cookie sheet to 1 inch thickness. Poke holes in the dough using a fork.
3. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes in the preheated oven, until the bottom is golden when you lift up the bread to take a peek.

*Danu Gray-Wolf is an initiate of [Order of the White Moon](#) through Sisters in Celebration.*