

Autumn Ritual: "Letting Go"

The beginning of November is a time when the veil between the worlds is very thin. This is a powerful release ceremony to do on your own or in a community of friends. Be prepared to comfort and nurture those who are grieving. Music is all from Libana's "A Circle Is Cast". (Tapes and music books are available, though live music is of course best.) Readings and music are only suggestions, ceremonies are best when you make them your own.

Prepare for this ritual by creating a place outside for planting spring bulbs. Luminarias can light the path from ritual space to the consecrated ground. If it is impossible to bury bulbs, people can take them home to plant them, or write what they need to release on a piece of paper and bury it in soil contained in a large container on the altar. The meditation may be pre-taped if you are doing this alone.

OPENING MUSIC "Earth, Air Fire, Water" Libana

INVOCATION TO THE SEVEN DIRECTIONS

FIRST READING "To everything there is a season"
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 The Holy Bible

UNISON READING "This is the Season"

"This is the season for long reflective walks
For Roads Not Taken
For things that might have been
For remembering the way things were
And will never be again.

"This is the season for remembering
Friends long gone
Friends who are leaving
And friends whose parting
is still a fresh wound on our hearts.

"This is the season of radical changes
In the weather
In our lives
As children grow leaving us behind.

"This is the season for letting go
Facing new challenges
Closing chapters
Opening doors."

- Melinda M. Perrin 1993

ROUND "Autumn Time" Libana

SECOND READING "Within the Circle of our Lives"
Wendell Berry (in *Earth Prayers.*, pg. 286)

TALK

"Letting Go"

People often become ill grieving for lost sweetness: a loved one, a way of life, a place, a time. If we could learn to let things go, we all would be healthier and happier.

We all are collectors. We collect books, rocks, CDs clothes, antiques, refrigerator magnets. We collect memories, experiences, emotions. And we collect people. It becomes very hard to part with favorites. Collecting can get to be a problem. We become junkies. Our closets become full of things we have grown out of, or that no longer suit us. Still we save: records that we no longer can play, college textbooks. It becomes harder and harder to find what we are looking for, so we buy the same things again.

In our minds these things become extensions of our personalities, and we are so afraid of losing ourselves that we will not let them go. The funny thing is that we don't own them in the first place. Ownership is just an illusion. When we die, what do we take with us? Some say experiences. Others say nothing.

We don't own the moon. We don't own our children. We don't own our parents. All these are ours for the moment and then they are gone. We don't even own our feelings. They flow through us like storm clouds and blue skies, and we should be open to them and react to them. We feel and then they disappear. When we attempt to hold them back, they build up like mountains.

Sometimes our feelings are so intense we cannot handle them at the moment they are with us, so we bury them, storing them for a future when we are able to examine what they mean to us. Sometimes feelings are very painful. If we store up too many painful memories without dealing with the anger, fear, and resentment they cause, they will poison us.

Sometimes memories are very wonderful, but we grieve for their "lost sweetness". This is true when someone we love dies, or a relationship fails. Again the painful emotions caused by this grief can include anger at the person (or god figure) who caused the loss. But often we are caught in the push/pull of needing to hang onto the love and not bearing to see, speak, or hear for the pain. If grief becomes too strong, we can waste away, not connecting physically or emotionally to the world around us.

Sometimes pain becomes a source that we feed on, nurturing hurts, angry words, forgotten deeds. It will twist our lives and bodies until we do

not recognize ourselves. Or we immortalize our loved ones, giving them superhuman traits that are beyond the living, isolating ourselves from those who would love us and free us from our lonely prison.

To become whole again, we need to let go. To clean out our emotional closets. To give ourselves permission to release things that are preventing us from finding what we really need: our inner selves. To make room for wonderful new things that we haven't allowed space for. Sometimes it helps to make a ceremony of this. To think of our private thoughts while we are surrounded by those who love us.

ROUND "Fly, Fly, Fly" Libana
(during this round pass a basket of bulbs)

MEDITATION (Most effective by candlelight, with the sounds of nature or heartbeat drum)

Autumn Ritual Meditation

Please sit comfortably, your bulb cradled in your hands. If you can, plant your feet firmly on the ground. Close your eyes and take three cleansing breaths. (ONE TWO THREE)

Explore the feel of the bulb in your hands:

Discover its shape

The dry-rough feel of its papery cover

The smooth hardness of the inner being

The string-like fringe of roots at its base

How cold is it?

Does it gather warmth and moisture from your hands?

(Wait one full minute)

Remember events, actions, words, people, thoughts, and feelings that lie dormant inside of you, making you as dry and hard as this bulb. Surround these thoughts with a warm, loving light from your heart center, and send them deep into the bulb in your hand.

(Wait one minute)

Do this with all the thoughts and pictures that come to you. Bathed in a golden light, let them go, one by one deep into the center of the bulb. (Wait) When you are ready, get up and take your bulb outside. Give it as an offering to the Earth. Remember, 'She changes everything She touches.'

When people come back in, give them a few minutes to collect themselves. Then explain that the flowers that come up next spring are evidence to the unconditional love of the Earth Mother, and Her capacity to absorb all our tears and turn them into beautiful flowers of rebirth.

CLOSING CHANT "Kore Chant" Libana

BENEDICTION TO THE SEVEN DIRECTIONS