

Sabbats

The Holy Days of The Wheel of the Year

Paganism is a religion of celebration, not redemption. These celebrations take place within "the Wheel of the Year," an ancient and sacred ritual calendar marking the Earth's changing seasons and the Sun's never-ending journey across the sky, as well as the Moon's waxing and waning cycles. Each holiday, or Sabbat, brings joy and good times along with deeply felt spiritual, cultural, and ecological meaning. The Wheel represents the life cycle of continual birth, death, and renewal as expressed in the changing seasons. These changing seasons also represent a psychological "map of consciousness" facilitating human growth. They contain the framework for personal transformation, rites of passage, healing, empowerment, and manifestation.

The Wheel of the Year comprises the seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn and winter and signify birth, growth, fading and death. These seasons of nature reflect the inner seasons of the human landscape as well. The Wheel consists of eight Sabbats, or holy days. These eight themes represent both the inner and the outer cycles of the seasonal, the celestial, the communal, the creative, and the personal.

Imbolc or Candlemas (February 1) - Candlemas is the feast of returning light, a festival of purification and dedication. It is the day on which winter turns upward to the spring. Winter and death are cleansed away, and as the days lengthen, hope grows for the warmth of new life. Candlemas is nurtured beginnings, a sweeping away of the past and an affirmation of things to come.

Spring Equinox (March 22) - Spring is the time of bursting forth, of realizing the potentials of Winter Solstice and Candlemas. On the equinoxes light and dark are equal in a moment's balance. The Spring Equinox is the time of conception, when the

rising light is ascending and overcomes darkness.

Beltane (May 1) - Beltane is the celebration and honoring of the Earth at Her most fertile time as She receives the seeds that will grow into the fall harvest. It signifies mystical union and harmony with the environment. The traditional Beltane fire symbolized the central hearth of the community and represented the mystic divine fire at the center of all things, whose spark of life is carried by each of us.

Summer Solstice (June 21) - Summer Solstice is the shortest night of the year, Midsummer's Night. This is the time of fertility realized. Here the circle wanes toward darkness and winter's mystery, though winter is still far away.

Lammas (August 1) - Lammas is the Sabbat of first fruits and green corn, the ending of summer. Lammas is a time of completions. It is the fertile, prosperous harvest that assures life's survival is nearly ready but not yet certain. It is still vulnerable to change.

Fall Equinox (September 23) - Fall is the time of Thanksgiving, a time of gifts and blessings worldwide. Day and night are equal and the balance of giving and taking, of light and dark, summer and winter, life and death are the focus of this Sabbat. Though the year is waning and winter approaches, the emphasis is less on death than on the message of rebirth in the harvest seeds and the plenty of the season.

Hallows Eve (October 31) - This is the new year, the time when the veil between this world and the spirit world is at its thinnest. It marks the onset of a darker, more introspective time of year. The theme of Hallows Eve is honoring darkness, memory of the dead, communication with the spirit world, and purification for the future.

Winter Solstice (December 21) - Winter Solstice, or Yule, is the night of longest dark, the point of deepest night and winter before the returning of new life. . .the rebirth of the sun. This time of year signifies enlightenment, when the light is reborn within the womb of darkness. The time of turning sun.