

Midsummer Renewal

June 9, 2024

Litha = Midsummer, the solstice

- time when sun stands still at highest point in the sky
 - illuminates the world with its fullest light
 - bathes us in its warm embrace
- longest day and shortest night
- nature in its fullest glory
- world is alive with the vibrant energy of renewal and transformation
 - time of abundance and vitality
 - painted in every color of the rainbow
- cycle of seasons tied to rhythms of our lives
 - time for basking in the warmth of our achievements
 - wisdom gained from our trials
- lessons of Midsummer
 - *a little* introspection
 - turn inward to reflect upon personal growth and transformation
 - shed the burdens of the past
 - release whatever no longer serves us
 - *moreso*: time for action, keeping ideas moving forward
 - seeds planted in the spring now in full bloom
 - "seeds of potential"—our ideas—allowed to flourish and thrive
 - rejoice in our own abundance
 - warmth of community
 - infinite possibilities that lie ahead

Renewal

- Resonant theme of Litha
 - Nature: renewal in flourishing plants, ripening fruits, blooming flowers
 - testament to earth's resilience
 - ability to regenerate and thrive
 - Nature undergoes cycles of birth, growth, death, rebirth
 - so do we, as individuals and community
 - constantly evolving, learning, growing
 - shedding old ways of being and embracing new possibilities
- Personal renewal

- calls us to reflect on our personal journeys
 - to acknowledge the challenges we have faced
 - to embrace opportunities for growth and transformation
- Door Analogy
 - "When one door closes another door opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us" (Alexander Graham Bell)
 - there are nearly unlimited doors you can go through
 - one closed door doesn't matter all that much
 - unless you believe that it was the only door that will ever exist
- Personal renewal not always easy
 - process of letting go, embracing the new can be challenging
 - essential for growth and well-being
 - requires letting go of what we no longer need
 - confront fears and uncertainties
 - step into the unknown with courage and resilience
 - through process of letting go, we create space for
 - new beginnings
 - fresh insights
 - deeper connections with ourselves and with one another
- Renewal
 - opportunity to delve into the transformative power of change
 - possibilities it holds for our lives and our communities
 - invites examination of ways to cultivate sense of freshness, vitality, and regeneration
 - even amidst challenges and uncertainties we may face
 - call to embrace cycles of nature and rhythms of our own inner landscapes
 - recognize endings are not only inevitable but necessary for new beginnings to take root
 - resilience—the ability to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to change, emerge stronger and more wholehearted
 - let go of attachments to the past, release old patterns and habits, open ourselves to possibilities of growth and transformation
 - relational
 - engage with others; foster mutual support, understanding, connection

- encourages creating spaces of belonging and inclusion where all are welcomed, valued, and affirmed
- comes in a variety of ways
 - including religious, spiritual, philosophical, and ethical

Practical/Personal Renewal: Walking

- Engineering school: feedback loop
 - the part of a system in which some portion (or all) of the system's output is used as input for future operations.
 - example: house thermostat. Low temperature = on, high temperature = off
 - human thermostats work the same! Sweating, shivering, etc
 - Also applies to software. machines, psychology, etc
- Walking as career enhancer
 - problems easier to think about when walking alone
 - problems easier to discuss while walking
 - more than work problems
 - walking meditation
 - Walking as a child
 - Walking with Grandma everywhere.
 - Escape the house. Exercise. Nature. Make up stories.
- Walking became a feedback loop? Did I invent this?
 - **solvitur ambulando** - "it is solved by walking"
 - means experiment to find answers
 - Don't just think about it. Try it.
 - Can also literally mean walking to find answers
 - Life's questions and challenges can be addressed through act of walking
 - Walking connects to rhythm of footsteps, flow of breath, world around us
 - Walking clears the mind
 - gain new perspectives, find solutions to problems
 - Walking for me is:
 - Retreat: a step away from routine
 - Service: a chance to assist others, even if just listening
 - Immerse in nature
 - Note: walking is not the only means of achieving this mental state
 - it's what happens to work for me
 - solo effects through: swimming, yoga, meditation, art, music
 - group effects through: social interaction, sharing a meal, gardening

- Find what works. When I say walking today, fill that other thing in!
- Walking mindfully in nature = find solutions, gain insights via movement, connection
 - connects deeply with the earth and our inner selves
 - clarity and inspiration for our paths ahead
 - celebrates nature's abundance, embraces personal, spiritual renewal

Personal Ritual: Walking the Path of Renewal

- Litha celebrates long days, abundant sunshine, beauty of nature all around us
 - Each step on the path brings us closer to clarity and transformation
- Midsummer walking ritual
 - Find a natural setting—a forest, a meadow, or a beach
 - Prepare for a mindful walking meditation
 - As you step into nature, carry themes of light, abundance, and renewal
 - Pay attention to sensations
 - feet touching the earth
 - sounds of nature
 - warmth of the sun on your skin
 - Reflect on Renewal as you walk
 - Seek Clarity: Allow your mind to wander
 - explore any questions or challenges you are facing
 - Reflect on what you wish to release from your life
 - What old patterns or habits are holding you back?
 - What past hurts are you ready to let go of?
 - Imagine these burdens being lifted with each step you take
 - Embrace new beginnings, what you wish to invite into your life
 - What habits, goals, or perspectives do you want to cultivate?
 - Visualize positive changes taking root and growing within you
 - Trust that the act of walking will help gain new insights and clarity
- Return and Reflect: After your walk, reflect
 - What insights or feelings arose during your walk?
 - How do you feel renewed and inspired?
- Through walking and renewal, we embrace the continuous cycle of life, letting go of the old and welcoming the new, all under the radiant embrace of the midsummer sun

Spiritual Renewal

- Choose to embark on a journey of spiritual renewal

- Schedule time for yourself and commit to it.
 - you don't "find" or "make" time. You identify it, put borders around it, and make it sacred.
- Leave space for magic

Things to bring into your life

- In the face of brutality, injustice, stupid politics, remember treasured experiences
- but do more than remember!
 - experience life's gifts and possibilities
 - Renew contact with what is most precious in life
 - truly a spiritual practice
 - an essential practice
 - feed your spirit, or it will wither
 - even good deeds can become joyless obligations
- Ask yourself: "What does my spirit need right now?"
 - quiet time in nature
 - visit to a new exhibition
 - time in the garden
 - concert by a favorite musician
 - walk with an old friend
- Maybe it's creating something. Creativity is good for the soul!
 - Play some music
 - Sing in a chorus
 - Paint or sculpt
 - Knit or quilt or sew
 - Cook up something new and special
- Don't feel guilty and self-indulgent doing things that you enjoy
 - they feed your spirit!
 - there will *a/ways* be people to call, meetings to attend, emails to answer
 - practices that get us in touch with what is most precious give clarity and strength to re-engage with the world
- Make space
 - to reflect on what your spirit needs
 - deepest longings will guide you
 - for beauty and love and play.
 - let your spirit heal and soar
- When spirits are strong, our work for compassion and justice has enduring power

- When spirits are renewed, we are blessings to one another and to the world

Conclusion

- May this Litha be a time of joy, growth, and deep connection with the natural world and our inner selves.
 - Carry the light and warmth of the sun within us
 - Embrace the theme of renewal, knowing that each step we take on our path brings us closer to clarity and transformation
 - Remember the wisdom of solvitur ambulando, of finding solutions and renewal
 - maybe through walking, maybe through some other creative pursuit
 - Hold space for one another's journeys of renewal.
 - offer support and encouragement to those navigating times of transition or uncertainty.
 - Celebrate the beauty and diversity of life, knowing that each of us has a unique role to play in the ongoing process of renewal and transformation.
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- May Midsummer be a time of joy, growth, and of deepening connection with ourselves, with one another, and with the world around us.
 - Carry the spirit of renewal with us as we journey onward, guided by the light of love and the promise of new beginnings.
 - Embrace the theme of renewal with open hearts and minds, trusting in the transformative power of change to guide us on our journey of becoming.
 - Draw strength from the ever-renewing wellspring of life itself, and may we be catalysts for renewal in our communities and in the world.