

STILL POINT

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EARTH JOY

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GRACE HAPPENS


Grace happens when we act with others on behalf of our world. In the face of impermanence and death, it takes courage to love the things of this world and to believe that praising them is our noblest calling. It takes courage to find the joy in the moment. Within that inner joy rests a song that wants to sing itself through us. We just got to be available.

Maybe the song that is to be sung through us is the most beautiful requiem for an irreplaceable planet or maybe it's a song of joyous rebirth as we create a new culture that doesn't destroy its world. But in any case, there's absolutely no excuse for our making our passionate love for our world dependent on what we think of its degree of health, whether we think it's going to go on forever. Those are just thoughts anyway. But this moment you're alive, so you can just dial up the magic of that at any time.

By refreshing our sense of belonging in the world, finding daily joy, we widen the web of relationships that nourishes us and protects us from burnout. By strengthening our compassion, we give fuel to our courage and determination.

Cultural shifts happen on a different level; they come into view only when we step back enough to see a bigger picture changing over time. A newspaper photograph viewed through a magnifying glass may appear only as tiny dots. When it seems as if our lives and choices are like those dots, it can be difficult to recognize their contribution to a bigger picture of change.

Joanna Macy compilation, edited



FOUR RITUALS TO HONOR SUMMER SOLSTICE

Honoring summer solstice is an act of reciprocity and gratitude: what you nourish in your life will flourish

Summer Solstice is the precise planetary moment when the earth's tilt reaches its zenith, bringing us the longest and lightest sun-powered experience of the year.

As the spring seeds have made their way through the belly of mother earth, Solstice ushers in the next cycle of the ecosphere's journey from darkness to light.

The earth's most dynamic time of expansion, growth, and abundance becomes palpable: our senses come alive with the scents, sounds, and the sun's glow touches us from within.

Celebrating Summer Solstice: Honoring Abundance, Illumination, and Expansion

"Solstice" is a Latin term that means to "stand still"—symbolizing the divine moment where the sun and earth meet each other in stillness. The sun's radiance invites us to merge with the earth's abundance, illumination, and expansive freedom. Imagine yourself running barefoot on the earth as a 7-year-old: wild and free!

As the earth's exquisite creations blossom before us, we too can tap into this fiery, fierce, and invigorating sun energy. When we honor the summer Solstice,



we expand our consciousness to a soul level and receive the potent light that naturally lives deep within each of us. A sacred power ignites inside this alchemical moment where the sun and earth stand in stillness and illumination together.

Solstice is a time to reflect on personal growth and get connected to playfulness, creativity, and expanding our consciousness into the realm of possibility. A time to rekindle who we are when we are most present to our true nature. Being

present to the earth's expression at midsummer invites us to expand our dreams and cast out our prayers that are most meaningful to us.

Solstice requires us to ground our energy towards the earth so that we may fully receive the illuminated frequency sourced from the sun. Be curious about what thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and energies you are feeding or playing along with. Discern and release what no longer serves you. Discover what lights you up daily and follow the path of joy every step of the way.



As the earth and sun constantly give back to us, honoring summer solstice is an act of reciprocity and gratitude. What you nourish in your life will flourish.

May we gather in celebration for the bounty, abundance, and light in which the summer solstice provides. May we engage in a reciprocal relationship with the earth and acknowledge how she sustains us daily. May we be like the sun and give back in the way of self-love, radiance, and collective compassion.

Four DIY Rituals to Honor Summer Solstice

Gather with loved ones to share a meal and celebrate abundance through food, storytelling, poetry, and dance. Share gratitude's for all that is light and radiant in your life. Welcome in the power of playfulness and joy on all levels.


Create an earth mandala, or outdoor altar. Gather seasonal items, stones, crystals, fallen branches and flower petals. Let your inner child go wild. Call forward your prayers for the earth and bask in the sun's warming glow. Honor the bounty and

beauty of the solstice season. Align with your essential self and clearly state your intentions or prayers for this cycle of your life. Merge with the fiery force of the sun's power.

Honor the Sun's radiance by creating a Fire Ritual. You can work with candlelight, or an outdoor fire if you have access to that. On one piece of paper journal what no longer serves you in your life. Express what has come to an end, or what you have outgrown. Burn it safely and visualize your body releasing the energy from the past. Now call forward what you are inviting in for the next six months until winter solstice. Honor the element of fire and wholeheartedly believe in your power to transform.

Spend time in nature; garden, make herbal potions, forest bathe, dance barefoot on the earth, do an outdoor walking meditation. Any way you can receive the earth's abundance with pure consciousness. Observe the inner shifts you feel when you merge with the elements.

By Mara Branscombe



HOW TO CELEBRATE THE SUMMER SOLSTICE WITH YOUR SHAMANIC DRUM

The Summer Solstice marks the longest day and the shortest night of the year, a time for honouring the light within and celebrating the fullness of life.

The Summer Solstice often falls on or around the 21st June, and is determined by the point at which the Earth's poles reach their maximum tilt towards from the Sun. Many will celebrate the sunrise on this day, as is tradition.

For millennia, people have honoured and celebrated the Summer Solstice in these isles. Many stone circles and ancient sites across the UK are aligned with the sunrise on the Summer Solstice. Most notably, at Stonehenge, many still gather to watch the Solstice sunrise, framed by the stones.

Ancient Celts believed that the hot Sun would banish evil spirits from

the land, granting great wealth through abundant harvests and fertile land for the coming year. Celebrations vary depending on heritage and tradition, but often bonfires are lit or great feasts are held, accompanied by dancing, or even wheels of fire being sent down a hillside.

The cycles of Sun between the dark and light half of the year also reflect our own inner and outer nature. Just like the Winter Solstice marks that time of going within, the Summer Solstice relates to our outward expression, and bringing our gifts to the fore.



The Summer Solstice also marks the transition from growing to nourishment, where the long days help to mature and ripen the plants and crops that have been growing through the Spring. This works on a personal level too, where our new ideas, visions and plans need their time in the Summer Sun to fully develop, before the harvest can come.

We share ways that we can work with our Shamanic Drums to connect with the magic and wisdom of the season, and this month, we continue with three ways that we can connect with the Summer Solstice.

In our regular drumming circles, we drum to connect and attune ourselves to the seasonal changes in the land, to remain connected and in tune with the wisdom and medicine each season brings.

How to use our Shamanic Drums to connect with the season:

Drum up the Solstice sunrise

Just as our ancestors gathered at sites like Stonehenge, or other sacred places near them to see the sunrise on Summer Solstice morning, one way that you can work with your drum at Summer Solstice is to drum up the sunrise, to honour life in its fullness.

You may be able to travel to somewhere which has a great view of the sunrise, or you may want to stay closer to home this year, perhaps even picking a room in your home with a window facing in that direction. Sit watching the approaching sunrise, and create a sacred space for yourself.

Holding your prayers and intentions in mind, you may wish to start with a very steady drum rhythm, building up as the sun rises, or just let the energy and spirit of the moment guide the rhythm of your drum, to welcome and celebrate this time that has been so important to people of this land for thousands of years.

Journey to connect with the Spirit of the Season

The Shamanic Journey is a practice where the rhythm of the Drum guides you into an inner visionary landscape, for guidance and healing. We often journey with an intention or a question, with the hope of meeting a spiritual being in this landscape to give us the answer or guidance that we need.

As this is a time of honouring our inner light and the gifts that we are to bring to the fore, the shamanic journey can be a powerful practice to meet this

inner light and receive guidance and direction on ways to let it shine. Call on the spirit of the season, and journey within, supported by your guides and allies.

Drum around your home to clear away the “bad spirits”

Just as is traditionally believed at this time, that the Solstice sun helps to clear away the “bad and evil spirits”, we can use our Shamanic Drum to help cleanse and re-energise our homes.

This is a great thing to do to revitalise your living space, and allows space for new creativity and inspiration, by clearing away the heavy or stagnant energy that inevitably accumulates in our homes.

Move around your home from room to room, drumming a steady rhythm to all the directions, and all the walls. Don't forget the corners of the rooms, these are also a place that needs clearing.

You may also want to combine this with other practices of space clearing, such as smudging, and invite the healing, cleansing and protective energies of the plant spirits into your home, too.

By Jonathan Weekes



3 WAYS CONNECTING TO NATURE INSPIRES JOY

Experiencing joy is about connection, whether it's to others or the world around us. Noticing the wonders of nature, big and small, is one way to connect and inspire joy.

So what is joy anyway? Isn't it just another way to say "happy?" According to George Valliant, professor of psychiatry at Brigham and Women's Hospital, happiness is a state of mind — as in "I am happy."

Joy on the other hand, surfaces subconsciously and is more warm and fuzzy feeling. Think of how you feel when you see an adorable puppy or watch your child walk for the first time.

Experiencing joy might seem like something you can't necessarily plan — yes and no. You can intentionally seek situations and environments where you have a better chance of encountering joy.

One of my go-to joy destinations is nature. I find joy in my garden, in the woods and even in the overgrown median between the on-ramp and the highway when I'm stuck in traffic.

Here are three ways nature inspires that special feeling of joy:

AWE AND WONDER

Nature is all about awe and wonder. Think standing on the beach watching the waves crash on shore, witnessing a pink and orange streaked sunset or, if



you're lucky, a lunar eclipse or meteor shower. Even a simple walk through the woods can inspire awe.

That sense of being part of something bigger than ourselves is magical. And it's exactly that connection to the greater world that helps us feel joy.

Another plus: studies show people who experience awe are more inclined to be generous and kind to those around them — and when we do good, we feel good.

NOTICE THE LITTLE THINGS

Joy doesn't require an earth-shattering event. In fact, it often arises from the ordinary. Most of our lives are relatively mundane, but if we pay attention, we can orient ourselves more towards joy.

One of my favorite times of year is late spring, early summer when the neighborhood begins to bloom. I make a point to examine branches and sidewalk spouts when I take walks. Within a few weeks, I notice small buds on the



magnolia tree down the street, knowing they'll soon unfurl into glossy green leaves.

Waiting on a plant, tree or patch of grass to grow, then glimpsing a full bloom or new leaf as the weeks go by brings on that feeling of joy. As they say, it's the little things. And nature is full of little things — butterflies, tiny shoots, a bird feather — to notice and delight in.

STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES

Noticing the good is a great way to open yourself up to feeling more joy. But if you really want to take your joy to the next level, practice savoring. You know

that saying, “Stop and smell the roses?” Give yourself time to not only acknowledge what's good, but actually appreciate it. Stay in the moment. Bury your nose in the roses and inhale! Studies show a practice of savoring leads to happiness and increased life satisfaction.

Getting outside and noticing the beauty of nature is a great way to access joy. If a walk in the woods isn't accessible or you live in an urban area, look to the sky and try cloud watching. You can also grow your own seeds for an up-close experience.

By Lisa Sadikman

“The world is not a problem to be solved;
it is a living being to which we belong.
The world is part of our own self and we are a part
of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of
our image of separateness, there can be no healing.
And the deepest part of our separateness from creation
lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature,
which is also our own sacred nature.

— *Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee*

EARTH JOY

“The heavens are telling the glory of God, and all creation is shouting for joy!”

These lyrics greeted me Easter Sunday, as I entered church during the choir’s prelude. And what more fitting words could there be than these right now, as it’s hard not to see the earth springing forth in joy!

There is a pathway along a stretch of river near where I live where someone has planted daffodils and scillas (also known as Spanish bluebells), and they have been blooming in droves the past few weeks. I’ve taken the opportunity to walk this beautiful pathway many times recently, and I have not been the only one. From the young family, with a toddler who wanted to run amongst the beautiful flowers, to the elderly woman, being pushed in a wheelchair by her caregiver, this sign of earth’s joy attracted everyone to its presence.

We often walk along, in the busyness of our daily lives, not noticing the earth’s joy that surrounds us, but in Spring we can’t help but notice this.

How might we be more intentional in noticing this joy? How might we not just recognize it in the ending of one season and the start of the next one, but take moments each day to embrace this joy?

JOY



For guidance in this, I return to St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun.

- **We can give praise for the sun – the bringer of day, and who with the moon and stars – lights the way to God's throne.**
- **We can give praise for the wind – for its calming breezes and its mighty storms. For all the way it helps sustain the planet.**
- **We can give praise for rain – oh, the blessing of water! Water that cleanses us; water that awakens all the sleeping elements of earth and brings them to life!**
- **We can give praise for the fire – the warmth of the sun that spurs us to fling open our windows and stop to tilt our faces up.**

So many reminders of earth's joy, if only we stop for a moment to receive them.

By Karen Bychowski

PRAISE FOR THE FOUR ELEMENTS

God, we thank you and give you praise for Brother Fire.

We walk by Fire's light.

Even through darkened times and places, Fire illuminates
each step along the path,

Even when the distant view is unclear and in shadow.

Fire purifies us, burning away the cluttered underbrush

And making way for new growth to sprout forth from the ashes.

Fire warms and comforts us, Dances for us and energizes us.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Brother Fire.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Sister Water.

We witness Water's power to shape earth's canyons and coastlines.

Water surrounds us with warmth and safety in our mother's womb.

Water blesses the earth with rain and sustains our life.

She cleanses and refreshes us, washing over us in gentle streams.

Water awes us with her beauty

As waves crash against rocks or gently roll onto the shore,

As she cascades down a waterfall

Or blankets a mountain with a soft white cloak,

As she reflects the beauty of the sky and trees in her clear lakes

Or shrouds a valley in an early morning mist.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Sister Water.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Father Air.

We are in awe of Air's power to create change—

In the roar of a tornado or in a whisper heard only within our hearts.

Air serenades us as it blows through the trees and canyons

Or simply rustles through the fallen autumn leaves.

Air cools us on a hot summer night, Brings bitter chill in winter

And carries the sweet scents of summer.

Air stirs us to action in song and symphony.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Father Air.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Mother Earth.

Our feet tread an almost imperceptible path

Across Earth's valleys, mountains, pastures, deserts and woodlands.

Earth sustains our life with the abundance of her harvests.
She shapes us and forms us from the very elements of herself.

Earth knows her great power, From deep within her molten core,
Reshaping, reforming and renewing herself.

Earth cradles us on our journey
And enfolds us when the journey is complete.

God, we thank you and give you praise for Mother Earth.

CLOSING PRAYER:

God, we praise you for the wonders of your creation,
sun and moon, stars and sky,
earth and air, fire and water,
north and south, east and west.

We know your love through loving relationships with you and each other.
We know that we are called to right relationships,
contemplation and action,
prayer and service.

We work to provide care for the sick,
welcome for the stranger,
shelter for those in need,
and to promote wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

We believe that you call us to work within structures
while we extend the boundaries of possibility.

Mother/Father God, grant us your creativity,
the courage of Jesus
and the wisdom of your Spirit

as we serve your people and work to promote healing,
health, wholeness and hope in our world. Amen.

By Sr Bea Hernandez, OSF Wheaton Franciscans - 2010

*This prayer is written in the Native American tradition
and in the tradition of St Francis' Canticle of Creation.*

PRAYER IN OUR LAND

We lift our arms and our spirits to the **EAST** of our Land
where white pine trees, black and red oak trees
and the oldest stand of Douglas fir trees live.
We bless and receive the blessing of this East,
home of woodchucks, ducks and geese.

We bow to the **SOUTH** of our Land
the only natural woodland of our Land
where the oldest trees live, the burr oaks, and with them hemlocks,
and shagbark hickorys and Norway maples.
We bless and receive the blessing of red fox and deer, owls and
raccoons who make their home in this South.

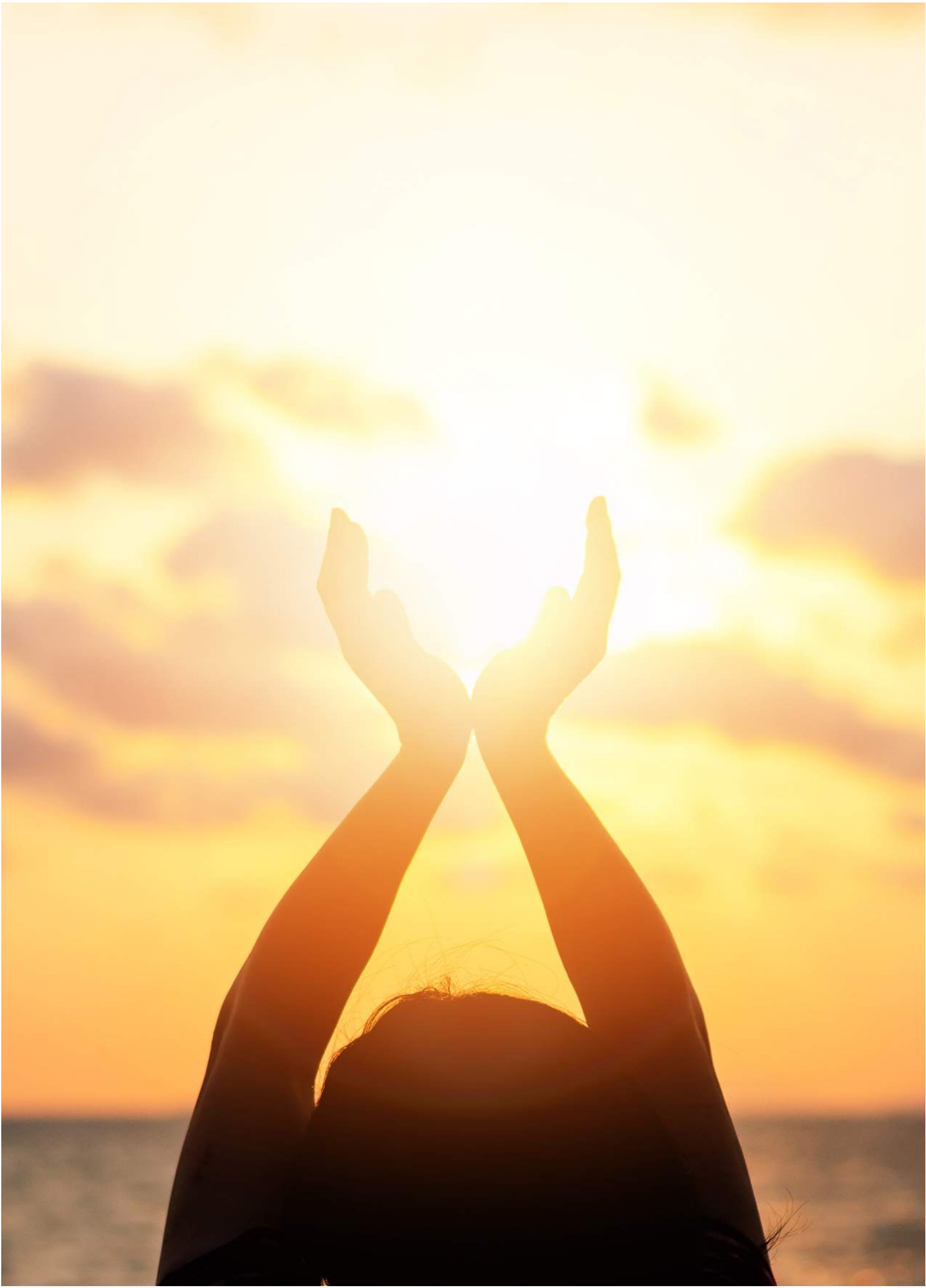
We raise our voices in gratitude and praise of the **WEST** of our Land
where a creek runs,
where cottonwood trees, Norway maples, honey locust, ash, and
crimson king maples live.
We bless and receive the blessing of this West,
home of beaver, muskrat, and a white heron.

We stand in honor of the **NORTH** of our Land
where a field of Illinois prairie wildflowers grow,
where the largest American elm lives
and where the oldest stand of sugar maples live.
We bless and receive the blessing of the coyote,
the red tail hawk, the turkey and the deer
who make their home in this North.

We recognize the gift of the crows, and sparrows, the cardinals and
the robins who live throughout our Land.
We bless and receive the blessing of the grass that covers the Land,
and of the rabbits and squirrels and groundhogs and skunks
who make their homes here.

May we, all of us, give glory to the **HOLY ONE**
whose life it is that we live.
AMEN.

— by Sr Jane Madejczyk, OSF



POEMS

Remember

by Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.
Remember you are all people and all people
are you.
Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.
Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.
Remember language comes from this.
Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.

Summer Solstice

by Carrie Richards

This was when the whole world measured time
This is when the light would turn around
This is where the past would come undone
and the spinning earth will mark a new beginning
Let's go back in time, to when it all began
To the breaking of new dawns
Where moments bright with fire, would light the chanting song
Where pagans worshipped sun, and danced among the trees
Wore strange masks of covered straw, and blessed cold ash with awe
Wreaths hung upon the door against all spirit's, dire and when the
winter's grasp let go, the sun reversed the pyre
This was when the whole world measured time
This is when the light would turn around
So that spring arrives, and seeds will sprout and grow
Oh, radiant sun, stretch the day, shorten night
Return earth's darkness into light
This is where the light will turn around
And this was where the past has comes undone

SOLSTICE



TO BLESS THE SPACE BETWEEN US

I arise today blessed by all things,
wings of breath, delight of eyes,
wonder of whisper, intimacy of touch,
eternity of soul, urgency of thought,
miracle of health, embrace of God.
May I live this day compassionate of heart,
clear in word, gracious in awareness,
courageous in thought, generous in love.

— *John O'Donohue*