

Twelve Holy Nights (December 25-January 5)

Many of us are very familiar with the "12 Days of Christmas" from the popular holiday song, but did you know that the 12 days after Christmas (known esoterically as the "12 Holy Nights") are actually a profound time of spiritual awakening? The Holy Nights begin the day following Christmas Eve, which comes three days after the Winter Solstice (December 21st). Esoterically, this three-day rhythm is connected to the process of classical Spiritual Initiation, in which the Initiate would be suspended in a death-like sleep for three days while their consciousness moved through the spiritual worlds. The time between the Solstice and Christmas is the time when the Initiate perceived the spiritual light of the Sun through the quiet Earth, which became spiritually transparent at the darkest time of the year. This is known as "seeing the Sun at Midnight".

December 25th is the day when we observe that the Light of the Sun is returning to the Earth. The days now begin to grow longer. December 24 and 25 is the time in different traditions of the birth of great avatars and divine beings: Krishna, Dionysus, Horus, Tammuz, and Mithra. In Mithraism the winter festival was called "The Birth of the Invincible Sun." There is also a connection to the Egyptian cult of Serapis, who was a god of the "Winter Sun." In Esoteric Christianity, December 25th is the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the human being who will later receive into himself the Divine Being of the Christ, the Spiritual Sun ("Solar Logos"), at the Baptism in the Jordan River by John. That baptism and the illumination of Jesus by the Christ is celebrated at Epiphany, January 6 (see below). The twelve-day period between Christmas and Epiphany are known esoterically as the Holy Nights.

The Twelve Days unite the Solar and Lunar calendar. Our calendar is based on 12 solar months, each month measured by the Sun's passage through one sign of the zodiac. In antiquity, a lunar calendar was commonly used which measures the Moon's movement through the zodiac in the course of 13 months. In this lunar calendar 12 days were added at the end of the cycle. These 12 days were considered a holy time when the Sun renews its forces and the Earth stands at a time between the worlds.

12 is the coding number behind physical creation. In the Hebrew Kabbalah, it is referred to as the "12 elemental letters" of the Hebrew alphabet; these are connected to the 12 diagonal lines on the Tree of Life pattern. In the West, the 12 signs of the Zodiac are seen to construct 12 levels of the human physical body. In the East, the zodiac is seen to construct the 12 energy meridians in the human body. (For much more on the coding systems behind the human physical and subtle bodies.

12 is also connected to the Sacred Geometry mystery of the "12 around the One." This is a core pattern of Creation. Twelve spheres will completely surround one central sphere of equal size. The body of the Cube is made up of exactly twelve lines. This divine principle of structure then manifests in myriad ways in different spiritual traditions: 12 Tribes of Israel, 12 Knights of the Round Table, the 12 disciples around Christ, 12 Arhats of Buddha etc. **The 12 Signs of the Zodiac create the consonant sounds, which sculpt all physical form.** These consonant sounds literally form everything in the material world (this is similar to the Indian sacred concept of creative "seed syllables".) For instance, the sound "B", which is formed through the forces of Virgo, energetically creates a protective enveloping space (as seen in English words like "body", "basket", "bubble", and the Hebrew word "beth" meaning 'house'). The consonant sounds sculpt the physical world, whereas the vowels bring soul forces into the physical forms created by the consonants. The keys to this subject are found in the Rosicrucian movement art of Eurythmy.

The Twelve is connected to the 12-fold Zodiac and to the spiritual formation of the physical world. There are mighty Spiritual Beings working through the forces of the Zodiac to bring form and shape to the manifest world. During the Holy Nights the Earth opens to the starry realms above and receives the patterns of the heavens into her core. The elemental beings of the earth, the Gnomes, receive these patterns and prepare the blueprints that will become the new life of the spring. We can see this reflection of the stars mirrored in the star-like shapes of the blossoming spring flowers.

The Holy Nights are the time that souls of the children who will be born in the coming year, gather at the threshold between the spiritual and physical worlds. If you are hoping for children in the coming year, or want to find a bond with the babies who will be born to friends or family, this is a wonderful time to connect to those souls.

The Holy Nights are a time to reflect on the past year and look ahead to the coming one. As each day of the Holy Nights corresponds to a month of the coming year, there is a tradition of examining one's dreams and waking experiences (and even the weather) of each day to get a glimpse of what the upcoming year's corresponding month may have in store. **The Holy Nights are a time for seeking the renewal of light & warmth within the human soul.** This inner renewal is reflected in the external reappearance of the Sun. This is a powerful time for real spiritual love to awaken in human hearts.

New Year's Day holds a pivotal place in the 12 Holy Nights, marking the halfway point of this sacred time. According to the Western Spiritual Tradition, at New Year our thoughts can reach to the highest spiritual realms. It is the time when we transcend our narrow identification with a particular race or nationality to unite with the universally human Cosmic Christ forces; this allows our thoughts to be perceived by the highest spiritual beings. So the 'New Year's Resolution' is a very spiritually important practice for us: to find goals in our life which transcend our national or group identity and embrace humanity as a single family. Great spiritual forces then empower our thoughts to manifest directly into physical reality. This is the origin of the "New Year's Resolution." Now is the time to set life goals, which will manifest our full spiritual potential in the coming year.

Epiphany

The Holy Nights culminate with the celebration of Epiphany on January 6. "Epiphany" comes from the Greek term meaning 'manifestation'. Now commonly known as "3 Kings Day", it is often thought of as simply the time when the Magi visited the infant Jesus. However for early Christian Initiates, this time was actually the celebration of the manifestation of the Spiritual Sun, the Christ, on Earth at the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. **At Epiphany the 12 Holy Nights are fulfilled with the Union of the Human and the Divine, which is enacted in every human being when we allow the Christ consciousness to be born inside of us. We can then move into the New Year renewed, inspired and strengthened.**

Keys To The 12 Holy Nights There are many ways to observe the Holy Nights. The following correspondences may be helpful in creating a meaningful practice for yourself:

December 25: Review the month of January from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of January. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Capricorn the Goat, reflected in the human body's knees and joints. The Virtue of Capricorn: "Courage becomes the Power to Redeem."

December 26: Review the month of February from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of February. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Aquarius the Waterman, reflected in the human body's lower leg and lower arm. The Virtue of Aquarius: "Discretion becomes Meditative Strength."

December 27: Review the month of March from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of March. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Pisces the Fish, reflected in the hands and feet. The Virtue of Pisces: "Magnanimity becomes Love."

December 28: Review the month of April from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of April. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Aries the Ram, effected in the head. The Virtue of Aries: "Devotion becomes the Power of Sacrifice."

December 29: Review the month of May from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of May. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Taurus the Bull, reflected in the throat. The Virtue of Taurus: "Integrity becomes Progress."

December 30: Review the month of June from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of June. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Gemini the Twins, reflected in the shoulders and the left and right aspects of the body. The Virtue of Gemini: "Perseverance becomes Faithfulness."

December 31: Review the month of July from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of July. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Cancer the Crab, reflected in the chest and ribcage. The Virtue of Cancer: "Selflessness becomes Catharsis."

January 1: Review the month of August from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of August. Set your intentions for the New Year. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Leo the Lion, reflected in the heart. The Virtue of Leo: "Compassion becomes Liberation."

January 2: Review the month of September from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of September. Zodiacal forces of Virgo the Virgin, reflected in the digestive system. The Virtue of Virgo: "Courtesy becomes Tactfulness of Heart. "

January 3: Review the month of October from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of October. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Libra the Scales, reflected in the hips and pelvis. The Virtue of Libra: "Contentment becomes Equanimity."

January 4: Review the month of November from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of November. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Scorpio the Scorpion, reflected in the reproductive system. The Virtue of Scorpio: "Patience becomes Insight."

January 5: Review the month of December from the past year, then envision and plan the coming month of December. Meditate on the zodiacal forces of Sagittarius the Archer, reflected in the upper leg and upper arm. The Virtue of Sagittarius: "Control of Speech becomes a Feeling for Truth."

January 6: Epiphany. This is the time for us to merge our conscious awareness with the Christ Consciousness. We can then go into the New Year refreshed and renewed to manifest our full spiritual potential.