

Anticipating Michaelmas

Dear Michele,

I've heard many times people say that autumn is their favorite season. Why is this?

Witnessing the earth's changing colors of greens to gold, crimson and chartreuse, while anticipating the warmth of a comfortable hearth does enkindle a fondness for the season. Most significant is the light. Moving lower in the sky from summer's heights, the sun seems to get more personal and notice me. The light is clearer, stronger, and deeper.

Every year I mourn summer's end. As beautiful as fall is, I know that it also brings trials. The days will become shorter, the air colder, and more energy will be needed to accomplish tasks. It is the beginning of another cycle of community life, in education, business and politics, where routines resume. It is a time to set intentions and focus my activities.

Spiritually, I wonder, what grade am I in? I think of this time of year as the start of another school year... a spiritual one. I'm not sure what grade I'm in, and I know it doesn't really matter. What matters is that I show up and start where I am.

Attending to and deepening one's relationship with one's self is an essential value in the study and practice of anthroposophical psychology. For me, this includes daily meditation, gardening, a movement and gesture practice, journaling, reciting mantras, and reading inspired texts. The nightly "backward

looking” practice helps me catch surprise glimpses of myself that occurred during the day that I would not otherwise notice.

As the equinox approaches (September 22 this year) and I embody the balance of light and dark within my own being of body-soul-spirit, *I FEEL MYSELF*. It’s this sense of “I”, no matter how faint or distant, that makes this the favorite season! No matter how far along one is, it is this feeling, this “I-ness” that yearns to grow and to know it self more. Autumn is the season when I reset my intentions for deeper self-care and inner work.

The excitement of the season does wane, as I encounter those parts of myself that are challenging to see and work with. The “backward looking” practice involves strengthening my “I” to observe all the parts of myself with a neutral self-interest, and developing compassion, love and forgiveness.

When I was a kid growing up Catholic, my mom had a statue of St Michael victoriously standing upon a serpent. I understood that figure of St Michael to represent good over evil. Michael, an Archangel, is a significant and high spiritual being who has taken upon himself the important task to help humanity choose the higher path. The festival of Michaelmas reminds us that we will be challenged through our fears and that we also have help from the spiritual world, and the ability to overcome.

I wonder if that light in autumn that seems to see me, is Michael staying watch with me, as I try to stay present in my practice of self-vigiling. I also know that this turning point of light that marks Michaelmas, is also the early beginning of preparation for the very special spiritual event that soon will follow, the mystery of Christmas and the winter solstice.

As a movement gesture, I begin with eyes gazing up and out, (towards summer’s heights) arms and fingers out-stretched. Feet and legs planted on the earth in a wide stance. Slowly, my arms and hands release and move downward, and my eyes gaze forward. My feet move closer together; I stand upright in balance, (gesturing the equinox). Slowly, my arms and hands continue downward into a cradling gesture as my feet come together and I curl myself within. I wait in darkness and silence. After some time in the solstice gesture, there is a small movement, a dawning. Slowly my limbs unfurl opening towards the outside. Finding balance again, in the equinox gesture this time starting from within. Moving outwards reaching towards summer’s heights, once again.

Michaelmas is a beginning, and yet it is also a turning point in light in the ongoing cycle of becoming myself.

Thank you!

Mary Fonte

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