

Winter Solstice: Sunday, Dec 21, 2025, 10:03am/the Shortest Day & Longest Night of the Year

Connecting Hearts in the Sweet Blanket of Sacred Silence, Music & Ritual for Welcoming the Light

- ◆ **My Sacred Intentions for *this* Winter Solstice**
- ◆ **Energies and Obstacles I want to Release**
- ◆ **Energies I want to invite into my Life and for the Greater Good**

Winter solstice has been a time for cultures throughout history to go inward, create meaningful rituals to nurture the soul and cultivate deeper relationships to friends and family. Cultures around the world have long held feasts and celebrated holidays around the winter solstice. Fire and light are traditional symbols of celebrations held on the darkest day of the year. Winter Solstice may have been observed as early as Neolithic period—the last part of the beginning about 10,200 B.C. Ancient stone monuments in Ireland and Scotland are aligned with sunrise on the winter solstice. Stonehenge, in southern England, is oriented toward the winter solstice sunset.

History of Winter Solstice Traditions and Celebrations...

Saturnalia was an ancient Roman holiday in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. It was a weeklong celebration in the days leading up to the winter solstice. During this time in Rome, food and drink were plentiful and the normal Roman social order was turned upside down. For a month, enslaved people were given temporary freedom and treated as equals. Because of when the holiday occurred—near the winter solstice—Saturnalia celebrations are the source of many of the traditions we now associate with Christmas, such as wreaths, candles, feasting and gift-giving.

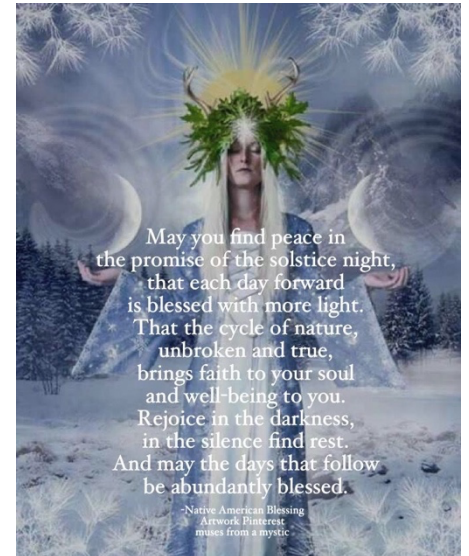
Yule was celebrated by the ancient Norsemen of Scandinavia from the winter solstice through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which became known as Yule logs. They would set one end of these logs on fire. The people would feast every day until the log burned out, often as many as 12 days.

Midwinter or Yule is observed by Wiccans (modern day pagans who follow pre-Christian spiritual paths). It is an important time for ritual and celebration. Participants gather in a circle. Those leading the ritual sanctify the space by walking around the circle chanting and sprinkling salt and water. This is followed by representations of the four elements - water, fire, air and earth. A fire or lighted candles symbolize the returning sun and to denote fire, a shell represents water, a feather for air, and a crystal for earth. Divinities or spirits are called into the circle to help with the ritual. During the ritual, a reading or meditation is done to honor and embrace the natural world and all the changes during this special time during Midwinter and the winter solstice.

St. Lucia's Day, a traditional festival of lights in Scandinavia, honors St. Lucia, one of the earliest Christian martyrs. It was incorporated with earlier Norse solstice traditions after many Norsemen converted to Christianity around 1000 A.D. As a symbol of light, Lucia and her feast day blended naturally with solstice traditions such as lighting fires to scare away spirits during the longest, darkest night of the year. On St. Lucia's day, girls in Scandinavia wear white dresses with red sashes and wreaths of candles on their heads, as an homage to the candles Lucia wore on her head to light her way as she visited imprisoned Christians, carrying forbidden food in her arms.

Inti Raymi: The Inca Empire, a kingdom that developed in the Andes region of South America, paid homage to the sun god Inti at a winter solstice celebration called Inti Raymi (Quechua for "sun festival"). In Peru, like the rest of the Southern Hemisphere, the winter solstice takes place in June. The Incas fasted for three days before the solstice. Before dawn on the day of solstice, they went to a ceremonial plaza and waited for the sunrise. When it appeared, they crouched down before it, offering golden cups of chicha (a sacred beer made from fermented corn).

Dong Zhi: The Chinese celebration of the winter solstice, Dong Zhi (which means "Winter Arrives") welcomes the return of longer days and the corresponding increase in positive energy in the year to come. The celebration may have begun as a harvest festival, when farmers and fisherman took time off to celebrate with their families. Today, it remains an occasion for families to come together to celebrate the year that has passed and share good wishes for the year to come.



Toji: In Japan, the winter solstice is less a festival than a traditional practice centered on starting the new year with health and good luck. It's a particularly sacred time of the year for farmers, who welcome the return of a sun that will nurture their crops after the long, cold winter. People light bonfires to encourage the sun's return; huge bonfires burn on Mount Fuji each December 22. A widespread practice during the winter solstice is to take warm baths scented with yuzu, a citrus fruit, which is said to ward off colds and foster good health. Many public baths and hot springs throw yuzu in the water during the winter solstice.

Shab-e Yalda: "Yalda night" is an Iranian festival celebrating the longest and darkest night of the year. The celebration springs out of ancient Zoroastrian traditions and customs intended to protect people from evil spirits during the long night. On Shab-e Yalda, (which translates to "Night of Birth"), Iranians all over the world celebrate the triumph of the sun god Mithra over darkness. According to tradition, people gather to protect each other from evil, burn fires to light their way through the darkness, and perform charitable acts.

Native American Traditions:

The **Zuni**, one of the Native American Pueblo peoples in western New Mexico, the winter solstice signifies the beginning of the year. It's marked with a ceremonial dance called Shalako. After fasting, prayer and observing the rising and setting of the sun for several days before the solstice, the Pekwin, "Sun Priest", traditionally announces the exact moment of **Itiwanna**, the rebirth of the sun, with a long, mournful call. With that signal, the rejoicing and dancing begin, as 12 kachina clowns in elaborate masks dance along with the Shalako themselves—12-foot-high effigies with bird heads, seen as messengers from the gods. After four days of dancing, new dancers are chosen for the following year, and the yearly cycle begins again.

The **Hopi** in Northern Arizona celebrate the winter solstice with a similar ritual as the Zuni. In the Hopi solstice celebration of **Soyal**, the Sun Chief takes on the duties of the Zuni Pekwin, announcing the setting of the sun on the solstice. An all-night ceremony then begins, including kindling fires, dancing and sometimes gift-giving. Traditionally, the Hopi sun-watcher was not only important to the winter solstice tradition, as his observation of the sun also governed the planting of crops and the observance of Hopi ceremonies and rituals all year long.

Solstice Night, a song written by SJ Tucker

Now comes the Solstice Night, I wish you safe and sound
Whether snow be light or heavy on the ground.
Our hearts bring back the light, as all the earth must do.
May stars fill up our sight, with wishes coming true.

My wish this Solstice Night, is grace and peace to you.
My wish this Solstice Night, is grace and peace to you.

Now comes the time of year, when shadow yields the throne,
The lords of Oak and Holly, the dance that must be done.
Keep faith and keep your candle. The sun is sure to rise
O'er the sleepy fields of winter, bringing beauty to our eyes.

Shalom to you now, Shalom, my friend
May bliss and beauty bless you, my friend
Through all your living and through your love,
Winter hearth and home be your own Shalom.

Upon this Solstice Night, I wish you safe and sound
Whether snow be light or heavy on the ground.
Our hearts bring back the light, as all the world must do.
May stars fill up our sight, with wishes coming true.

My wish this Solstice Night is grace and peace to you.
My wish this Solstice Night is grace and peace to you.

