

Ms. Linda Doherty

Religious Perspectives

Introduction to Wicca

“My name is Linda Doherty. I’m really happy to be here. A little bit of background, my spiritual path led me to the religion of Wicca about 9 years ago, a little bit before I found the church of Iron Oak which has been in existence now for more than 20 years. And they offered classes and they still do offer classes. We have 16 classes that a Wiccan may go through and it teaches the basic ethics of Wicca. And it’s pretty much like a Wicca 101 class. I decided to stay with Iron Oak and today I am a high priestess and elder of the church. And I’m quite proud of my accomplishments.

A lot of people hear the word Wicca or witchcraft and get all creeped out by it or offended by it. And really it’s not much more basic than a nature-based religion. It is a pagan or neo-pagan religion or spiritual path. We honor both a goddess and a god because we believe that in life the feminine and the masculine are needed. We all have feminine and masculine within us and so that’s how we came to the conclusion that there had to be something more than just a god.

For many years I personally had a lot of trouble. I grew up Catholic, went through parochial school, and just never really felt comfortable. And then I ended up in a recovery program, a 12-step recovery program where I found a spiritual path that suited me pretty well. But a higher power was just not enough. And I started looking into a lot of the older religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Native American, of which I am, have some Native American in me. And then finally I found Wicca and decided this is what I wanted. This is where I belonged.

Wicca is an old English word that means wise man. And wicce or witche means wise women. If you look in the old English dictionaries that is what you’ll see under those two words. Wicca came about here in the United States back in the early 1960’s by Gerald Gardner he brought it from England. After he had written, two books, on witchcraft. And the word wicca stuck because it meant wise one or wise person or wise man.

We don’t have a Satan. We don’t worship Satan. Nor do we believe in the concept of hell as is seen in most of the mainstream religions. We believe that, well, we don’t believe in the original sin. We believe you’re born with a clean slate with the power to do whatever good or evil we choose to do. And then we have karma. So if we choose to do bad, then karma will usually bite us in the butt. Wicca is usually polytheistic but it can be monotheistic. Polytheistic being the fact that there are more than one god, more than, many gods. Monotheistic is one god, one true god.

Most Wiccans recognize the divine is dual, the feminine and the masculine, goddess and god, imminent and transcendent, within and without. Some consider it to be monotheistic considering the god and goddesses being manifested from one all god that has neither male or female characteristics. Or, some simply believe in the aspects of god and goddess while others

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believe in many gods and goddesses. As a Wiccan we have that choice to believe however we want to believe.

Wicca embraces nature and natural magic. And most of us believe that energy and spirits exist in nature. We believe that all life is sacred. We prefer to hold our ceremonies outdoors, feet on the ground, among the trees, beneath the sun, the moon, the stars, because we believe in the interconnectiveness of the universe, between us and the universe. We work with the divine energies of the universe and we work according to the phases of the moon.

There are 8 Sabbaths throughout the year. And we celebrate the four seasons which are the solstices and the equinoxes, Fall equinox, spring equinox just coming up. And we will be celebrating Saturday night in a Sabbath ritual where we celebrate fertility, the newness of life, with the grass growing, plants growing, and life coming back. And then there are four other special occasions that we celebrate. We celebrate the moon phases; the waxing, full, and the waning. And that is when we do whatever magical work that we need to do using the four elements of air, fire, water, and earth.

There are many denominations in Wicca just as there are in Christianity. We have solitary, family traditions, covens, just to name a few. Along with many different cultures we have the Celtic, we have the Egyptian, and we have the Italian, which is called Strega. We have very little in the way of commandments or rules. But our main commandment would be the Wiccan Rede: 'An it harm none, do as you will.' And that means harming anyone whether a thought or a deed. We have perfect love and perfect trust and we see the divine in each person that we meet.

We believe in the three-fold law. That whatever we put out, whether it's good energy or bad energy, will come back to us three times or more, or as I said, karma will bite us in the butt. We consider the most important part of our religion the sacredness of living and life. Not just life itself but the process of living as well. We believe that divinity exists within each of us as well as all living creatures. And as such we believe it is an offense to discriminate against people because of race, color, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

I know that there are a lot of questions. I've been told that you are a very talkative and lively group so I can't wait to hear how everybody ask questions. So thank you very much and having me here and listening to me.

Disclaimer

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