



## **Priestess, Pastor, Peacemaker**

May 21st, 2012

I began studying Earth-based traditions in 1987. For more than twenty years, I called myself "Pagan." Of course, for more than twenty years prior to that I considered myself Christian - and of the Catholic persuasion most of that time.

In 2005, I was awakened from a dream and all I could remember was a simple statement; "Ecospirituality is not a religion - its a way of life." I researched the word ecospirituality, which had not been part of my vocabulary, and found it strongly connected to the Franciscan nuns. Ecospirituality became the topic that bridged my Catholic upbringing with my Pagan practices.

Having been ordained in Interfaith Ministry in 1996, one of the few formal paths of ministry available to Pagan people who do not gather in traditional congregational settings, this dream gave my ministry new direction. I realized that, if I could find the right words, I could teach what I had come to value so much - access to the Divine through Nature - without teaching any theology. I could teach to anyone, of any faith tradition, without intruding upon their freedom to worship in their own personal way.

My experience of the Divine presence in Nature has never been about worshipping Nature. Nature has simply provided a reliable and consistent doorway to Oneness. It can happen on my front porch as easily as it happens in the deep woods. The warmth of the sun, the beauty of the trees, the soft blush of wind that caresses my cheek...and my consciousness shifts. Each facet I notice opens me to the brilliance of the Diamond, and faster than I can think it, I am interconnected with the "All."

Through the Colorado Ecospiritual Center, I have had the pleasure of sharing this practice with people of diverse faiths. We have talked together, shared ceremony and ritual, celebrated rites of passage, and compared ideas and experiences. I have shared the concept that Nature is "The Original Holy Book" and that it has much to teach us. We seem to all agree that whether we experience the Creator as energy or persona, we long for direct access. I love sharing ways that Nature serves this purpose for me.

Today, so many years down the road from where the journey began, I am ministering in a Church that teaches "Practical Christianity." Lots of folks have asked if I have "converted" my beliefs. How does a Pagan Priestess teach Christology. I often ask myself that too!

In truth, it is easier than I expected. The challenges come not from the varying beliefs or practices, but from my own imbedded theology - ideas I accepted as true when I was child, just because someone

# Ahriana's Musings

said they were true. Today, I am releasing what no longer serves me – from every spiritual path I have ever walked.

Within me, bridges have been built. On a weekly basis, I invite people to walk across these bridges with me, offering them the possibility that there is value in all spiritual teachings and practices. I do not stop being Priestess because I pastor. I do not stop being Minister because I stand at the crossroads of many paths and celebrate their confluence.

The ego desires to name what cannot be named. We may choose any label we like, run our spiritual perspectives through any lens, yet each and every one of us has our own experience of God. No two can ever be exactly alike – and no label will ever fully describe the indescribable presence of the Divine.

As we evolve, during this transformative time on our planet, we have distinct choices to make that will inform our future. Perhaps we could consider letting go of our labels. I am neither Catholic, Pagan nor Christian. I am, somehow existing within the heart of the Divine, animated by that Source, and evolving. And – even as I write, I know that these words are not a full statement of the truth of my experience. There is so much more.

My ecospiritual experience brings me closer to my own soul, closer to the spirit of what is holy, and closer to each of you. We share “common ground.” For this, I am truly grateful. I remain committed to sharing Ecospirituality whenever I am given the opportunity. It is in the arms of Nature that I find what can never be defined by labels.

*Ahriana Platten*