
Women were undoubtedly honored as powerful shamans, daughters of the Earth and partners of the Sun. Women were considered shamanic not only because of their magical life-giving abilities but also because of their unique relationship and communication skills with reindeer (in addition to other animals and much of nature).

In pre-Christian times, human women were honored as powerful shamans, partners of the Sun and daughters of the Earth. They were viewed as the representatives of the all-mother goddess, and before the major Aryan invasions overtook these Mother-oriented tribes and cultures, they were regarded as the sole creators of human life. Women were also seen as the ultimate expression of Life (with a capital L).

Do you feel inspired or empowered by knowing how the female shamans were respected and honored for their independence, knowledge, and skills in days of old?

[F]or Anglo-Saxon pre-Christian religions it [Mothers' Night] was a time to celebrate both motherhood and female ancestors. Ancestor veneration was a very important aspect of indigenous religions. Though both male and female ancestors were honored, female ancestors played an important role as guardians of the family line.

Do you and your family celebrate your ancestors. What role do you think women play in the family, community, and the world today?

It [the Christmas story] is a telling of the rebirth of women after centuries of being ignored, forgotten, even persecuted. Mary's story returns the balance between women and men, becoming the New Eve in concert with Jesus as the New Adam. It becomes the story of every woman's need to reflect on the presence of the divine feminine within, to face doubts and still be faithful, always trying to reconcile faith and experience without forcing them into a masculine mold.

Mary's story is especially accessible to cultural and personal interpretation, at once open and vulnerable, yet mysterious and strong. She is both virgin and mother; disciple, prophet, and compassion personified. Mary is our connection to both goddess and woman, and, prompted by their own experience, contemporary women find hidden dimensions in Mary's story. We see a brave young woman of thirteen or so willing to commit herself to an action whose consequences she cannot foresee. The mom who saw to her son's safety, education, and religious upbringing. The wise older woman who walked with her son on his journey, and the heartbroken mother who held her son's dead body in her arms. Mary speaks to us as ordinary women and men, yet she represents not only the historical human woman who once lived on earth, but also the sacred goddess who resides in heaven, appears at times to living persons, and intercedes with God for the renewal of us all.

Does the Christmas season have particular significance for you as a time of rebirth and renewal?

Does the life of Mary have relevance to your life? How so? Or why not?

Do you believe Mary intercedes for us with God?