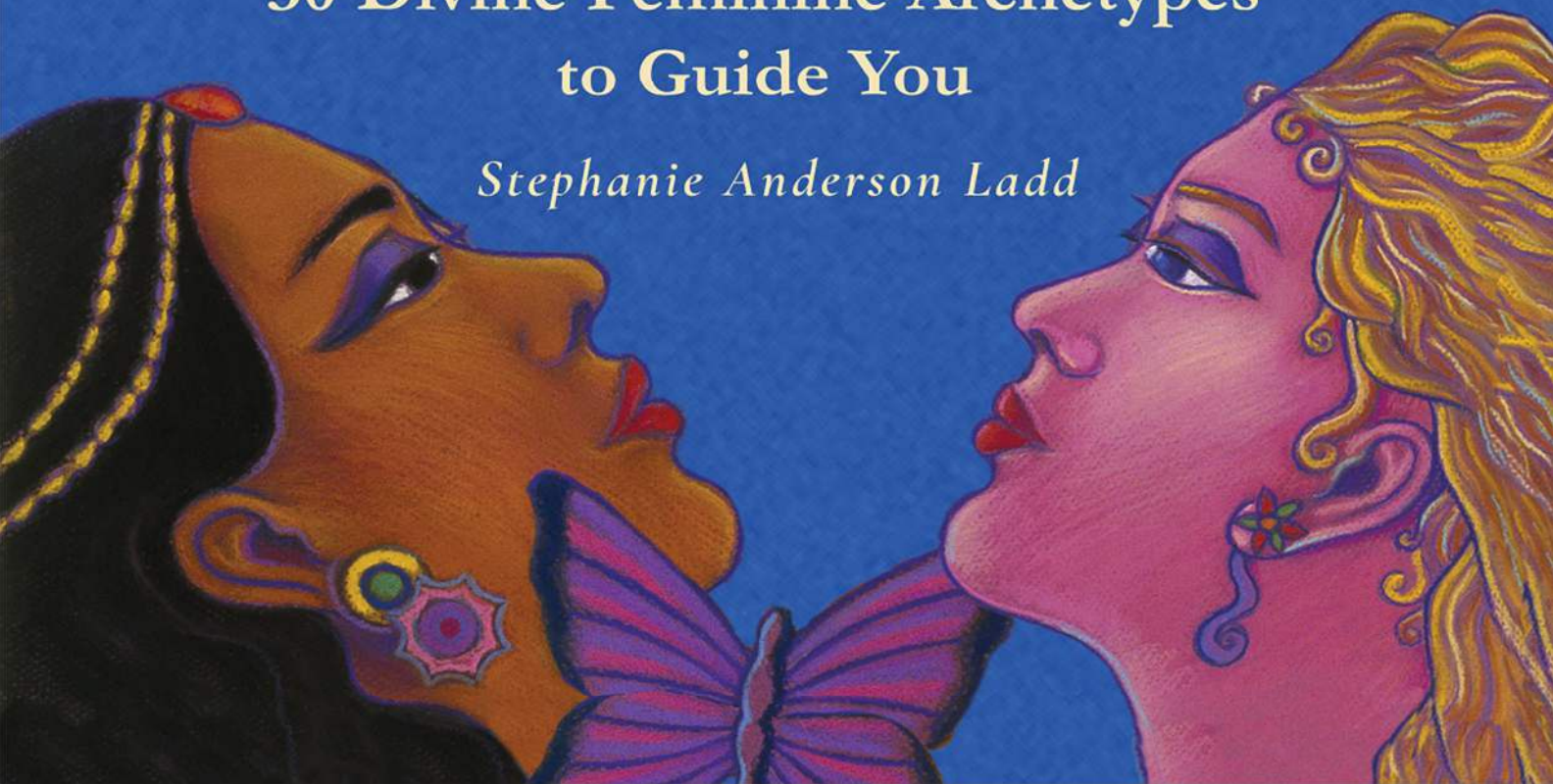




GODDESSES OF SELF-CARE

30 Divine Feminine Archetypes
to Guide You

Stephanie Anderson Ladd





» CHAPTER ELEVEN «

Reparenting: Learning to Mother Yourself

NOTHING BRINGS THE INNER CHILD into your awareness more acutely than becoming a parent yourself. Ideally, you want to come to know the wants and needs of your Inner Child and how to mother her before you take on the role of being a parent. Holding your innocent, helpless baby and trying to figure out how best to nurture your child often brings up your own unmet—and often hidden—needs and desires. When you learn to mother yourself, you are able to be a better partner and parent, if and when you decide to take on that very important role. When you learn to mother yourself, you actively heal childhood wounds in the service of self-care.

A woman might ask herself: How can I care for a baby when I was not cared for adequately as a child? Beyond providing the basic survival needs of a child, such as food, clothing, and shelter, attending to the emotional needs of a child is the most crucial aspect of being a good parent—making sure your child grows up feeling loved, adored, wanted, and respected. A child has a much greater chance of a healthy emotional life and partnership when she grows up without experiencing neglect or abandonment. For example, being left to your own devices with little guidance or parental interaction is a form of neglect. Parents who showed little interest in your feelings or who rarely expressed emotion and affection leave you feeling unseen, empty. On the other hand, situations where a child is smothered and manipulated, or expected to caretake an

MARIAH'S STORY

It has been a year since her divorce was final, and Mariah is realizing how her troubled relationship with her mother played out in her marriage. Growing up, the roles were reversed—she was the mother, and her mother the child who needed constant love, attention, and reassurance. Mariah learned that to be seen and valued she had to repress her feelings and put her mother's needs first or her mother would ignore her, criticize her, and call her selfish.

Consequently, Mariah learned to put everyone's needs ahead of her own and become a people-pleaser in her friendships, workplace, and marriage. She knows now she married a man much like her mother, who expected her to cater to his wishes with little thought to her own. She assumed the mother role again, trying to meet the demands of a needy man-child. Mariah is beginning to see that putting herself first does not mean she is selfish, but empowered. She is determined to learn to be the good mother to herself that she never had.

emotionally immature parent, or made to feel she has to be perfect, always the “good girl,” also lead to wounding. These are all forms of emotional abuse, which is often harder to acknowledge and identify than physical abuse.

If you experienced any of these kinds of emotional wounds growing up, it is important to acknowledge them and determine what needs healing in you. Learning to reparent yourself—to be your own best mother by looking to the example of the archetypal Great Mother—is a way to start healing the wounded Inner Child.

What does a good mother do when her child is hurt, lonely, scared, angry, or sad?

She sees her.

She listens to her.

She allows her feelings.

She soothes and comforts her.

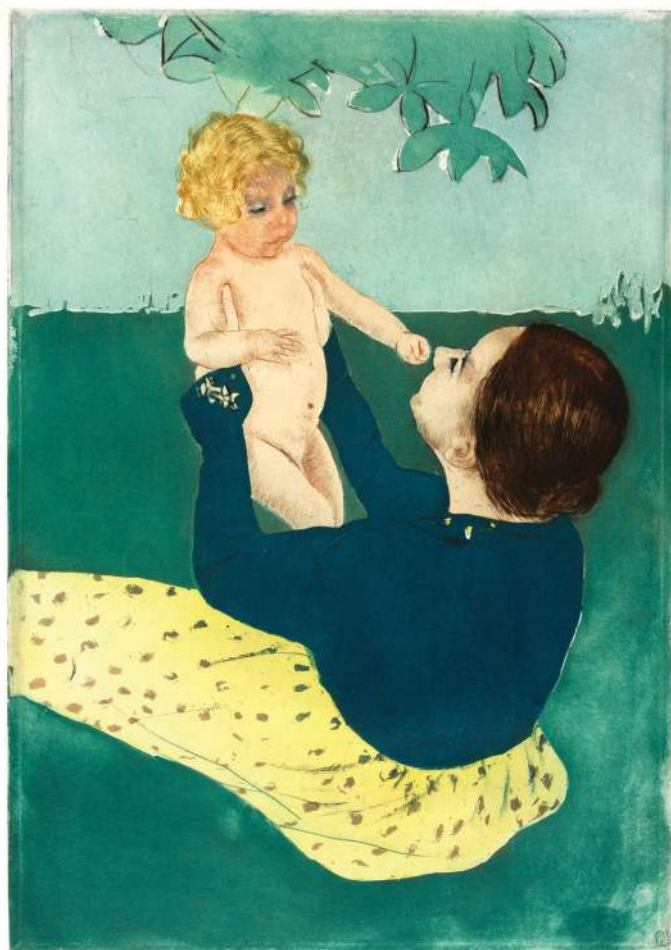
She reassures her.

She expresses empathy and understanding.

She holds her.

She protects her.

She helps make it all better.



The Mother Wound

Chances are, if you had a mother who was usually there for you on a consistent basis—“the good-enough mother” (because there is no perfect parent)—you have developed an ability to comfort and care for yourself (even if that ability may need a little fine-tuning). If, however, you had a mother who was inconsistent in her love for you and left you unsure of when you would receive care and attention; or a mother who was emotionally unavailable and let you down more often than not; or a mother who expected you to support and care for her, to put her needs first; or a mother who was verbally or physically abusive, you have a *mother wound*.

This emotional wound sets up an unconscious pattern of self-destructive behaviors and limiting beliefs that may include self-sabotage, self-sacrifice, and people-pleasing, leading to overriding feelings of guilt, shame, and low self-esteem. Without help, guidance, and healing, you may repeat these patterns in adult relationships.

All children deserve unconditional love to see them through the difficulties and challenges of growing up. If you did not feel loved unconditionally as a child, it leaves you feeling that you either have to work hard to be loved and valued or that there is something wrong with you. Unconditional love means you are loved even when you make mistakes, when you misbehave, when you do not know any better. It does not mean you received no consequences, but it does mean your parents continued to love and guide you when you slipped.

The mother wound is intergenerational and gets passed down through the *motherline* until you decide to heal yourself and stop the pain lineage. Because the mother is generally in the role of the primary caregiver, the nurturing role tends to fall more heavily on the mother than the father, but a father who is abusive, absent, or under-nourishing can also cause wounding (see below). This wound extends back to the dawn of patriarchy, some 5,000 years ago, when women’s generative power, autonomous sexuality, and role in society were devalued and depotentiated. This inherited wound is largely due to living under a patriarchal power structure in family, church, government, and culture.

In healing your mother wound, you need not vilify or hate your mother. You simply need to see the truth of your wounding, as well as her wounding, without trying to save her or put her needs before your own. Your job now is to save yourself and become the mother that you need and want. When you learn to set boundaries that allow you to be a separate person from your mother or father—to have your own feelings, to make your own way, to follow your own North Star—you recover your sense of Self. When you heal yourself you do your part to heal the world.

What about a Father Wound?

You may have a father wound if you had an undeveloped relationship with your father or one in which he was absent or abusive, whether physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally. Having a father who is loving, affirmative, and supportive helps you feel good about yourself as a female and develop confidence in your relationships.

A father who is not in good relationship with his own inner feminine feeling aspect may not be able to relate to his daughter in a healthy emotional way. A father who projects a fear, disregard, or hatred of women onto his daughter will also cause her to have a father wound.

What is the Inner Child?

The term “Inner Child” refers to the part of you that still sees the world through the eyes of a child, that remembers feeling open, playful, joyful, spontaneous, and creative as well as hurt, angry, scared, and lonely based on your childhood experiences. In many ways, the Inner Child can be thought of as your *True Self*—how you came into the world, with your own special qualities, quirks, feelings, unique personality, and perspective. Of course, how you were parented affected your Inner Child and your childhood experiences, but on some level this is the part of you that sees through the cultural and familial overlay and stays true to her core identity. She knows what she wants and needs to thrive if she can just be supported and allowed to develop into her own person. As you



heal childhood wounds and practice self-care, you become aware of an internal drive to protect and care for your Inner Child, and at the same time develop a willingness to allow her to be seen, to express her true nature.

You could look at helping and healing this part of yourself as removing the bindings of shame to get to your soul essence, as well as giving yourself permission to be all that you are. The degree to which you heal your childhood wounds and learn to mother yourself is the degree to which you will be a good parent—one who is present for your own children's feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants, including your own Inner Child's. Knowing how to nurture yourself helps you have healthier relationships. When you learn to meet your own needs and at the same time receive love and care from your partner, you live in balance.

Your tender, vulnerable Inner Child needs love and protection. Once you have left your parents' home, it is up to you to provide the care and compassion you craved by mothering yourself the way you always wanted to be mothered.

You learn to:

- listen to, not judge yourself
- accept and comfort, not criticize and punish yourself
- love and forgive, not hate and hold on
- nurture your passions and make time for what you love, not ignore them and talk yourself out of them
- encourage yourself, not denigrate yourself
- have faith in yourself, not stop believing in yourself
- see your strengths and build on them, not put yourself down
- acknowledge your flaws with empathy, understanding, and determination to do better, not criticize yourself
- ask for help when you need it, not try to be all-knowing and perfect
- give yourself pats on the back when you succeed at something, not treat yourself as undeserving or never enough
- forgive yourself for making mistakes and learn from them, not shame yourself and stop trying
- give yourself time to rest, relax, and recuperate, not push yourself to exhaustion
- give yourself the gift of play and fun, not all work and drudgery
- acknowledge your creativity and make time for it, not tell yourself you are not creative
- allow all your feelings, not repress them

- choose people in your life who love, respect, and support you, not people who put you down or hurt you
- be vulnerable and real, not closed and inauthentic

The Great Mother

The Great Mother Goddess in her many forms—from the Virgin Mary, the Black Madonna, and the Virgin of Guadalupe, to Asherah, Isis, Kwan Yin, and Parvati—will help you be a good mother to yourself, and by extension to your own child. Mother goddesses dwell in all cultures, ethnicities, and skin colors. It is up to you to decide which of these archetypes you resonate with most and call upon her to guide and protect you.

The Great Mother has existed since the dawn of time, since humankind began imagining its origins. Early people noticed that as babies were born from a female's body, so plants and trees grew from the fertile soil of the Earth, which became synonymous with the Mother and Mother Earth, the life-giving vessel. The Mother is one of the most primal archetypes known to us. She exists in the collective unconscious, that vast storehouse of ancestral knowledge, memory, and imagery to which all human beings have access through dreams and the imagination.

In the beginning was the Mother. Early groups and cultures, before the establishment of civilizations and religions, were matriarchal, not patriarchal. Early people did not know the father's role in procreation. They only saw how the female body swelled with life and gave birth. They witnessed the awesome power of this life-giving ability and the mythological conception of *goddess* as fertile mother was born. A baby has a direct experience of the archetype of the all-giving, all-powerful, all-nourishing Great Mother upon whom he or she depends. The reality of the personal mother only begins to be understood through the formation of ego, consciousness, and separateness as the infant grows.

The icon of the mother holding her child can be seen in early images of the Egyptian goddess



Isis that morphed into the Black Madonna and then the white Virgin Mary as Christianity took hold. They all convey a sense of oneness between mother and child. Many of these images show her suckling her baby, a reminder of the nourishment you receive from the mother who births you. These figures symbolize both the initial birth of a newborn babe and rebirth as an adult who develops and changes over time with the sufficient loving care and tutelage of a caring mother.

It is the nurturing mother who helps you through transformative experiences—externally in early life, and internally as you move away from your personal mother and begin life as an adult. Holding to this image of the primordial symbiotic relationship helps you feel protected, safe, and connected to the source of life as an adult. That is why it is important to develop a sense of your Inner Mother to see you through life and help you feel lovable. The Inner Mother is the impetus for practicing self-love, self-compassion, and self-care.

The shadow of the Great Mother is the Terrible or Devouring Mother, an archetype that can be seen in myths and fairy tales, often as the jealous, vengeful goddess or the rejecting, wicked stepmother. It is important to come to terms with this shadow side of the mother and integrate this part so that it does not become an unconscious destructive force that acts against yourself or upon others. The archetype of the Great Mother contains both the light and the shadow, for she, like Mother Nature herself, is both a creative and destructive force. Work with her positive aspects that you relate to and feel comforted by, but be aware of the shadow, which will show itself as an unhealed mother wound.

In this chapter you will meet the Virgin Mary and one of her manifestations, the Virgin of Guadalupe, as well as Kwan Yin, the Chinese goddess of compassion and mercy. While Mary has her roots in Christianity and Kwan Yin in Buddhism, both are beloved Mother Goddesses who transcend their religious origins and are revered across faiths and cultures.

Make a Mandala of the Great Mother

A good way to bring in the energy of the Great Mother is to visualize her multitude of forms by creating a collage. Begin by gathering various images of the Great Mother from cultures and countries around the world. This could include the ones mentioned above, as well as the mother goddesses you have met in this book such as Aphrodite, Demeter, Yemaya, Sophia, Tara, Kali, Isis, and assorted pictures of Madonna and Child.

Collage these images onto a poster or foam core board on which you have drawn a large circle or mandala. Or you may choose to make it on a circular poster board or in your art journal. Consider using pre-cut, round, cardboard cake bases you can find at craft and hobby stores as a canvas.

A mandala is a symbol of the Self—the circle represents the whole being comprised of the many parts within it. See the Great Mother as a round jewel containing the myriad goddesses that reflect her many facets. You may want to add paint, fabric, ribbon, washi tape, buttons, charms, beads, and other elements to your collaged mandala. Let it come to life in a way that mirrors you and your desire to love and mother yourself. Select images of the goddess that you find comforting and fill you with a sense of safety and security, protection and promise.

Mariah found that the process of gathering images of mother goddesses and gluing them into a circular form was healing in and of itself. It was as if she were putting back together pieces of herself—pieces broken by a deep, ancestral mother wound. Seeing pictures of loving mothers holding their child allowed Mariah to feel more compassion for herself, her mother, and her grandmother, whose stories of neglect and abandonment had been handed down to her. She knew that to be healed and whole, she needed to be that good mother to herself, and so she started giving herself the things she desired and longed for—time to be with herself, time to journal and create art, time with caring friends who understood and appreciated her. She placed her finished mandala above her altar, where she could see it every day and remember the capacity to love and nurture herself that her Inner Mother contained.



The Story of the Virgin Mary

Mary was a young teenage girl betrothed to the older Joseph and living in Nazareth when she received a strange visitation. The angel Gabriel appeared and gave Mary the message that God had chosen her to bear his son.

After Jesus's birth in a manger in Bethlehem, Herod, the king of Judea, heard of the prophecies of a new king that would usurp him. Acting very much like the old jealous gods, Herod ordered that all male babies be killed. Fearing for their son's life, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt where they lived for twelve years. Mary went on to marry Joseph and have other children, so she was in one sense a very real human woman and in another a woman raised to the status of goddess by virtue of being named the *Theotokos*—Mother of God, with its surrounding myths.

Mary and Joseph returned to Israel with their family and so began the story of Jesus Christ and the miracles he performed, ending with his death and resurrection. As a mortal mother, Mary stood by her son as he became "The Chosen One." She witnessed his compassion for *the least of these*—the paupers, the prostitutes, the lepers—and she was there when he was crucified. Like Demeter, she represents the abiding presence of a mother who never gives up on her child.



The cult of the Virgin Mary grew throughout the Christian world. Her motherly devotion and compassion provided comfort to those who prayed to her. She was seen as the soft counterpoint to a judgmental and punishing God.

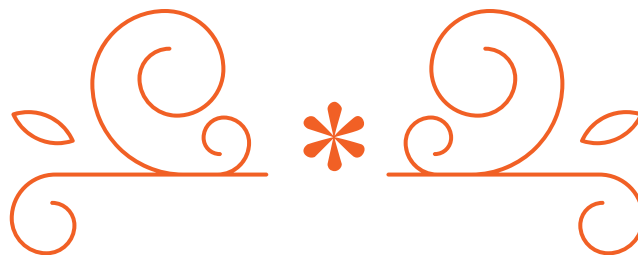
She was the nurturing mother who was there for all, particularly the sick, the weak, the poor, the powerless. Yet the Church has kept her in her place, making her subservient to the patriarchy, doing their best to strip her—and by extension, women—of equal power. Yet she persists as a feminine icon of strength, abiding love, protection, and succor.

The Holy Mother or the Virgin Mary is the extant goddess who stands in for all of the ancient Mother Goddesses revered in times past. Although Christianity created a new story for this particular mother goddess, it borrows from earlier myths of mother and child in which there is a miracle birth or the child is taken away and sacrificed or becomes king or queen. Isis became pregnant and gave birth to Horus, the falcon god and king, after putting together the dismembered pieces of Osiris's body and fashioning a golden phallus. Demeter searched for her daughter, Persephone, lost to the Underworld until they were reunited when Persephone rose from the land of the dead in the spring and summer, but reigned there as goddess and queen the other half of the year.

As discussed in previous chapters, the virgin goddesses were not necessarily women who had not had sex, but women who had sovereignty over their own mind and body and did not need to be in relationship with men or gods to wield power. That is, until Mary's story became one of literal virginity to absolve her and her son of "original sin." Her power as a mother goddess was stripped away by the church fathers in the Christian story. It was men who decided which stories would survive and how they would be told.

By the 5th century, Christianity had spread over much of the ancient world. The texts and books of the Bible written by learned men were selected by those in power as a way to rule their subjects. Men now controlled the story. The many gods and goddesses previously revered were replaced with one God—a father, not a mother. However, people who were used to venerating a protective mother goddess were not satisfied with the one God the Father, and so over time elevated Mary to the status of a mother goddess through myth and art.

The name Mary comes from the Hebrew *Mariamne*, which means "lady" or "wise woman" and the Latin root *mare*, synonymous with the sea. Many of the Great Mother goddesses, from Aphrodite to Isis to Yemaya, come from the sea, the primordial womb of all life, the feeling waters of Mother Earth. She is known by many names, which connect her to the earth, sea, and stars, including Stella Maris (Star of the Sea), Queen of Heaven, Morning Star, and Queen of Life.



Mary Speaks



Dear Daughter, I am the creative, life-giving force that exists within you. I am spirit transformed into matter, which comes from *mater* or mother. I am your body, soul, and spirit—wholly or holy yours—human and divine. What is mine is yours. I am but a reflection of your divinity.

I wear a blue mantle reflective of the earth and sea, from which we are born. The stars upon it are to remind you of your heavenly divinity. My red dress represents our shared blood. I stand on a crescent moon to remind you of your changing tides as a feminine being, of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, of which we are a part. I wear a golden crown, a symbol of our sovereignty, Daughter. The guardian angels that surround me serve as messengers between heaven and earth. I hear you. I see you. I am with you.

I am here to help you heal your wounds, Daughter.

If you were hurt as a child or your body betrayed, I am here to help you love yourself and know that you were innocent and good, then and now.

If you were not adored and cherished, I am here to love you and help you know that you are always treasured.

If you were not protected and pampered, I am here to offer you my lap and my arms to hold you.

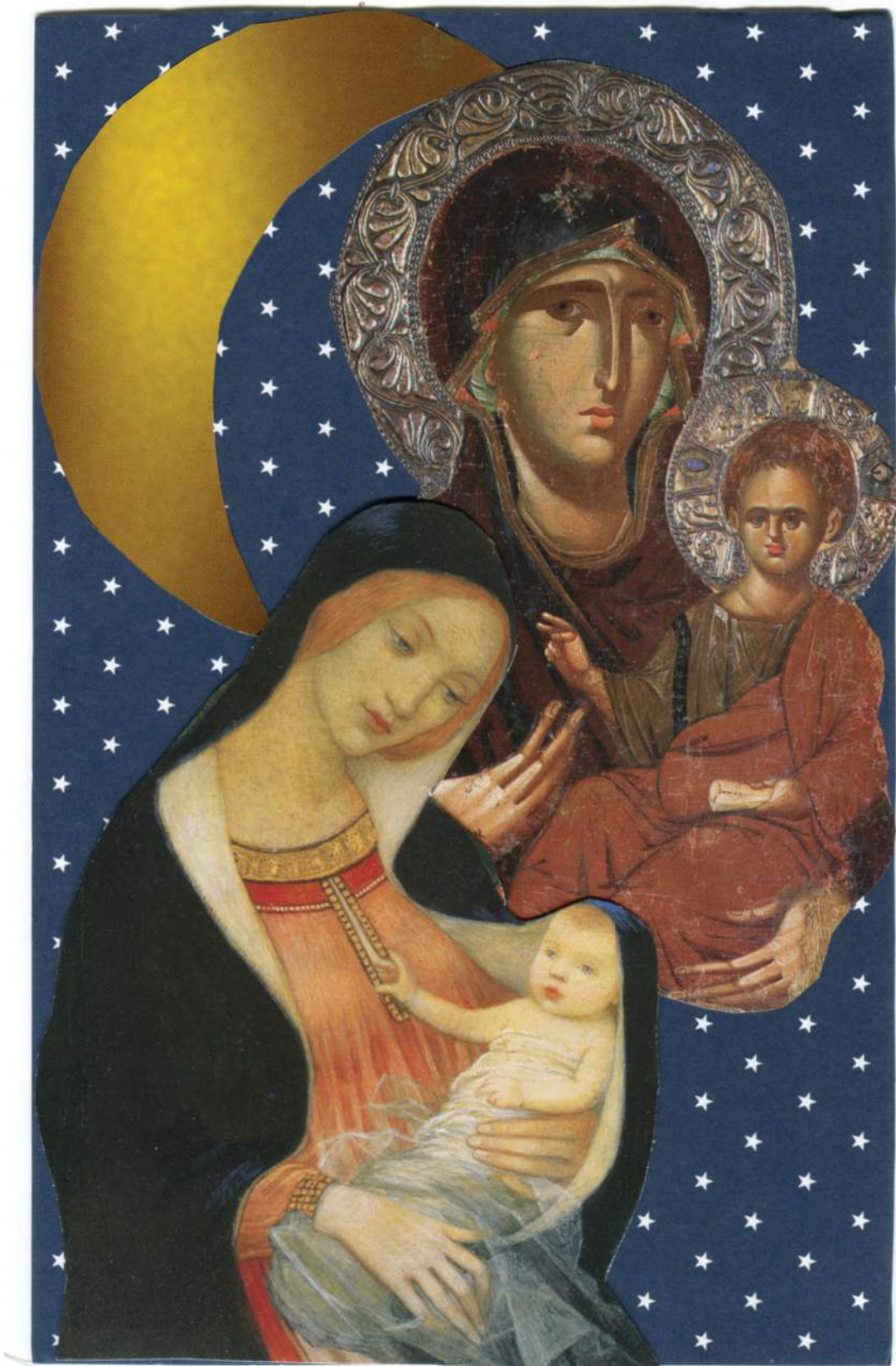
If you were neglected or abandoned, I am here, abiding with you always. You are not alone.

If you were not seen for all of who you are, I am here to see you and witness your uniqueness and your wholeness.

If you were not allowed to be yourself, I am here encouraging you to be all that you are.

If you came to believe there is something wrong with you I am here to tell you that you are enough.

I love you for who you are. Remember to love yourself in the same way, for you and I are one.





A Prayer

*Look to the Star, call upon Mary!
In danger, in difficulty or in doubt,
think of Mary, call upon Mary.
Keep her name on your lips,
never let it pass out of your heart.
Following in her footsteps, you will not go astray;
praying to her, you will not fall into despair;
thinking of her you will not err.
While she keeps hold of your hand,
you will not fall,
you will not grow weary,
you will have no fear.
Enjoying her protection,
you will reach the goal.
~ Saint Bernard*



OBJECTS AND SYMBOLS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR ALTAR TO THE GREAT MOTHER OR MARY

Colors: blue, red, white, pink

Objects: figurines and images of madonna and child, the Virgin Mary, red or white candle, seashell, rosary beads, a picture of you as a young child, a photo of your mother, grandmother, or a mother figure in your life

Gemstones: rose quartz, carnelian, pearl

Flowers: rose, lily

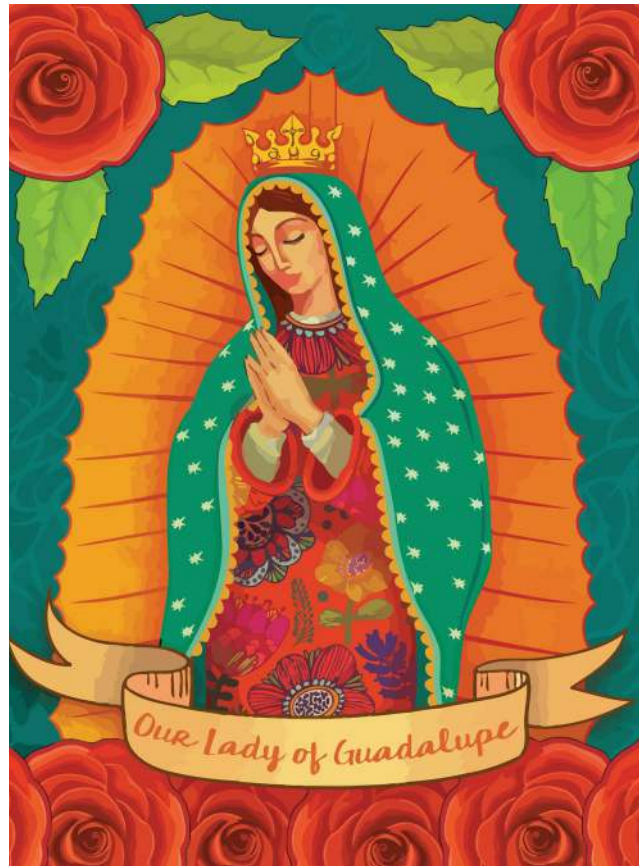
Element: water

Chakra: heart (4th chakra)

The Story of our Lady of Guadalupe

One day in December 1531, Our Lady appeared before a peasant named Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in Mexico, where once there stood a temple to an ancient Nahua (Aztec) goddess of love and fertility. Her name was Tonantzin, which means “Our Mother.” When Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, she instructed him to tell the bishop she wanted a church built for her on this hill. He took the message from the Blessed Mother to the bishop, but the bishop did not believe he had seen such an apparition and demanded proof.

Juan Diego reported back to the beautiful lady that he needed to provide evidence of her existence. She then told him to gather flowers to take back to the bishop. The flustered man could not imagine he could find flowers blooming in December, but as he descended the hill he saw that it was covered in blooms of every color and kind. He gathered as many as he could and put them inside his *tilma*, or cloak, and brought them to the bishop. As he opened his tilma, the flowers fell to the floor in a great profusion and the image of the Virgin was visible on the cloth. The Basilica of Guadalupe was built, and the tilma with Our



Lady emblazoned upon it was put on display, where it can still be seen to this day.

The Virgin of Guadalupe, also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe, revered in Mexico and the Americas, is another form of Mary, though she is not shown with a child. Instead, she is pregnant, ensconced in an oval-shaped mandorla suggestive of an agave plant as well as the vulva.

The story of this Marian apparition was first told in the 1600s, some 100 years after most of the Nahua and other indigenous peoples of the land now known as Mexico had been converted to Christianity. It is significant that the date of the apparition was 1531, just ten years after Cortez conquered the Aztec people, as his mission was to convert the native people to Christianity.

The Virgin of Guadalupe's syncretism from indigenous goddess to Christian icon made her a beloved mother figure throughout the Americas and Spain. It was in Spain that she was originally honored as a Black Madonna before she appeared in Mexico as La Virgen Morena (the Brown Virgin). When Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1810, the Virgin of Guadalupe became the patroness of free Mexico. She is one of many manifestations of Mary associated with miracles. She is a goddess who brings strength, hope, love, and non-judgment to those who seek her favor. She also embodies the spirit of social justice for she is a warrior for the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed. She is an avatar of liberation, whether from internal strife or societal and racial injustice.

Both Marys—the Holy Mother and the Virgin of Guadalupe—are examples of currently revered goddesses born out of reverence for ancient mother goddesses like Isis and Tonantzin, who came before. The Virgin Mary has a number of feast days, including January 1, the day she is celebrated as the Holy Mother, and September 8, her birthday. December 12th is the day The Virgin of Guadalupe is celebrated.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Speaks

Dear Daughter, There are many burdens that women, and particularly women of color, have been forced to carry—many forms of oppression we have had to bear, all while having guilt and shame for our womanhood, for our sexuality, heaped upon us. As the Brown Virgin Mary, I offer you a model of standing tall, standing firm, unafraid, unbowed, unbroken, asking for what you want and need, and seeing to it that your needs, and those of your children, are met.

It is time to throw off the shackles of the patriarchy and claim your wholeness, holiness, and equality with men and with people of all races. I stand with you in fighting the good fight, in righting wrongs, in treating all people with dignity and respect, and expecting to be treated likewise.

When I rose from the soil on Tepeyac Hill, I spoke up for what I wanted, and I implore you to as well. I am your strength,

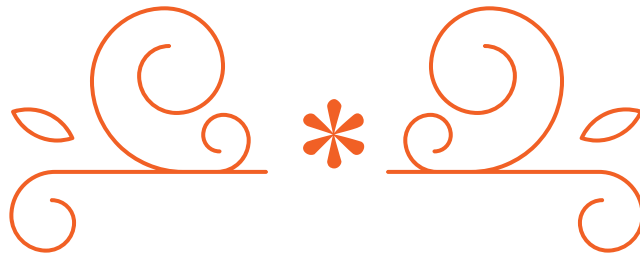


your courage, your steadfastness, your knowing. I encourage you to speak your truth, not stay silent. I support you to take a stand, not hold back in fear. I urge you to fight for yourself and others, not accept mistreatment, abuse, or injustice.

Am I not here? I, who am your Mother?

I am listening. I am watching. I am with you.

I have been with you since the beginning of time. I am of the earth. I go by many names. I have had many incarnations. I have your back. You can lean on me. Call on me and I will protect you.



OBJECTS AND SYMBOLS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR ALTAR TO THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

Colors: blue-green, white, red

Objects: figurines and images of Our Lady of Guadalupe, candle with her image, picture of you as a young child and mother figures who were there for you

Gemstones: amazonite, jasper, turquoise, abalone

Flowers: rose, agave plant, poinsettia

Element: earth

Chakra: root (1st chakra)



Kwan Yin

In China and throughout many Asian countries, the most widely beloved mother goddess is Kwan Yin (also spelled Kuan Yin, Quan Yin, Guanyin, and Kannon in Japan). Her name means “she who hears the cries of the world.” She is the Goddess of Mercy in the Buddhist tradition. Like the Himalayan Tara, she is a *bodhisattva*—one who is becoming Buddha but remains on Earth to alleviate suffering and bring enlightenment. Call upon her when you need protection, compassion, and rescue.

She is typically shown holding a vase or jar in her left hand (the side of the receptive feminine) and a willow branch (sometimes a lotus flower) in her right (the side of the active masculine). The vase holds water—the nectar of life—as well as the compassion she pours out onto the world. (Kwan Yin is also considered a goddess of the sea, who watches over sailors and fisherfolk.) The willow is known as a tree that bends without breaking and is used to whisk water for energy clearing. In some likenesses, she holds a *mala*—prayer beads in Buddhist tradition similar to a rosary. Kwan Yin often wears a flowing white robe, symbolic of her purity and regenerative ability, and a crown with the Buddha, her teacher, upon it. She is shown sitting or standing on a lotus

flower or riding a dragon. The lotus is a lovely flower, yet it grows out of the mud, a reminder of the ability to rise from darkness and bloom in the light. The dragon represents spiritual wisdom and transformation.

Kwan Yin may be seen as gender-fluid. It is believed the goddess originated in India as Avalokiteshvara, a masculine bodhisattva, who began to be revered in China in the first century CE, some 500 years after the Buddha lived. By 1000 CE he evolved into the feminine emanation of the bodhisattva known as Kwan Yin. She became a reminder that women hold up half the sky; that the divine feminine is as important and necessary as the divine masculine. Over time she became a treasured goddess and savior to people in need—from infertile women to fisherfolk in danger of drowning at sea—a divine mother to all.

The Story of Kwan Yin

One story about Kwan Yin imagines her as Creator of the World and of all species—from man to monkey to praying mantis—10,000 in all. It was her job to teach the many different animals how to live together, how to find shelter and sustenance, and how to treat one another with respect. As long as Kwan Yin lived on Earth with them, they thrived and were happy. They loved being able to turn to their Mother Goddess for guidance and advice whenever there was trouble

or misunderstanding between them. She always helped them sort it out, and they lived harmoniously for many eons. When she saw that her work was done, she ascended to the heavens, much to the dismay of the many creatures who had come to depend on her.

The animals tried their best to maintain harmony as if Kwan Yin were still with them, remembering what she would say and do to calm them and make peace. But before long, the animals began fighting each other for food, territory, and dominance. Eventually, some cried out for her help. Kwan Yin, of course, heard their cries and feeling compassion for her earthly children, returned to Earth.

She listened to their complaints, aided them in settling their disputes, and prepared to return to her mountaintop in the heavens. They implored her to remain with them, but she gently reminded them of their power to govern and care for themselves. A little rabbit who had been afraid during the turmoil when she was gone spoke up and begged her to stay and look after them.

Kwan Yin thought of a way to watch over her children with the help of a creature who lived among them. She chose a plain brown bird, and through her creative magic transformed it into a beautiful, multi-colored bird with spectacular iridescent tail feathers adorned with eyes at the end of each feather. This splendid peacock would be her eyes on the ground, and so the peacock struts proudly in its role as Kwan Yin's emissary.

Kwan Yin is the embodiment of motherly love, grace, and forgiveness. When you beseech her, she will come and alleviate your suffering with her open-hearted wisdom and compassion. Gazing upon her iconic figure, you will find she has a calming influence and the ability to soothe your soul, as all good mothers do.

Imagine her riding in on her dragon to rescue you whenever you are feeling unmothered, unloved, abandoned, or bereft—whenever you cry out to be heard. She arrives, holds you close, and pours her empathy and understanding onto you from her vessel of life. She takes her willow whisk and gently caresses your skin with it from your head to your toes, taking away the pain, drying your tears, comforting you with her gentle presence. See her as a part of you, your own Inner Mother. You may want to honor her on June 19, her feast day.



Kwan Yin Speaks



I hear you, my daughter. Call upon me when you are sad, lonely, worried, perplexed, scared, hurt, or in danger. I am a miracle worker who hears your cries. I do not shy from suffering. I wrap my arms around you and hold you close so that you may cry on my shoulder.

Listen for my soothing voice, whispering...There, there, my child. I am with you. You are not alone. I am here to help you see that you can transform your old wounds by feeling all the feelings, by naming them, by telling me your story. I will protect you and help you by listening to you and loving you just as you are. I will remind you that you are enough.

You are loved, Child, you are loved. I am by your side, reflecting your goodness, your worthiness, your sweet soul essence. You must love yourself as I, your Great Mother, love you.

My miracles are not magical but work through understanding what is. You can shift your painful reality by making a change in the way you practice self-care, in the way you see yourself.

When you learn to see yourself the way I do—through the eyes of the loving mother—you will heal and grow from the darkness of fear, hurt, lack, trauma, and suffering into the beautiful lotus flower who rises from the mud and shines her love and light for all to behold.

OBJECTS AND SYMBOLS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR ALTAR TO KWAN YIN

Colors: white, pink, green

Objects: figurines and images of Kwan Yin, dragon, white or pink candle, vase, picture of you as a young child, peacock feather

Gemstones: jade, pearl, pink opal

Flowers: lotus, rose, chrysanthemum, willow branch

Element: air

Chakra: crown (7th chakra)

Journal Prompts

What is your mother wound? In what ways was your mother not there for you?

What is your father wound? In what ways was your father not there for you?

How have these wounds affected your relationship with your parents?

What learned patterns and wounding from your childhood have you seen play out in adulthood?

How can the Great Mother archetype help you to better love and mother yourself?

How can the Great Mother archetype help you to better mother your child or children?

What mothering do you need now? Make a list of how you would like to feel mothered.
How can you provide this needed mothering and nurturing for yourself?

In what ways could you be more compassionate with yourself? Create a prayer of love and compassion for yourself, put it on your mirror or altar, and say it daily.

How is it challenging for you (if at all) to see and accept God the Mother or the Goddess, given the patriarchal structure inherent in family, church, and culture?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.