

Episode 19: The Way of the Rose Part 1—
the goddess hiding in the rosary
Thursday, December 5, 2019

[music] *You are not moving, you are being moved.
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.*

Janet Conner You are not praying. You are not praying; you are being prayed. Everything changes when you get this, when this enters your body, your heart, your mind, your feet, your hands. I'm not praying. Patriarchy would say to you, "Get on your knees. Say your prayers." I've been there. I've done that. This is so radical. You're not praying; you're being prayed, and you're being prayed at the speed of love. And that's when everything changes.

I'm Janet Conner, *Prayer Artist*, and you have arrived in perfect timing, speed of love timing, to the 19th episode of this, my love of my life, this radical new post-patriarchal prayer podcast. I am almost able to say that. It's just like being, what, in second grade trying to say, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." I never could do that, but I now have to learn how to say post-patriarchal prayer podcast.

In *Praying at the Speed of Love*, we are doing something very radical. We are sharing a deep exploration of prayer, not prayer as you may have been taught it, but original prayer. And original is such a fun word because it means ancient, and it also means at exactly the same time brand new, in this moment. Original prayer which is mystical prayer, which is prayer that has always been and always will be. It's prayer in source, of source, with source, like a river flowing out of original love. In other words, this is prayer way before patriarchy, way after patriarchy, and way beyond patriarchy.

My experience of prayer and my understanding of prayer and what the OED says about prayer is so tiny. This magnificent thing has been stuffed in this tee, tiny, little box of supplication of an external male god, following a very strict set of words and rituals, when prayer is a radical living presence of the Divine Feminine.

So this is the great love of my life since I was wakened by the Divine Feminine, Sophia, the name for me, on February 25th of 2018. Of course, it had to be in the middle of the night—you're going to find out why in this conversation—and I clearly heard in my left ear, "*Prayer Artist*." I wasn't planning on that. I had books to write and courses to teach and things to do, and they didn't fit under this umbrella called *Prayer Artist*.

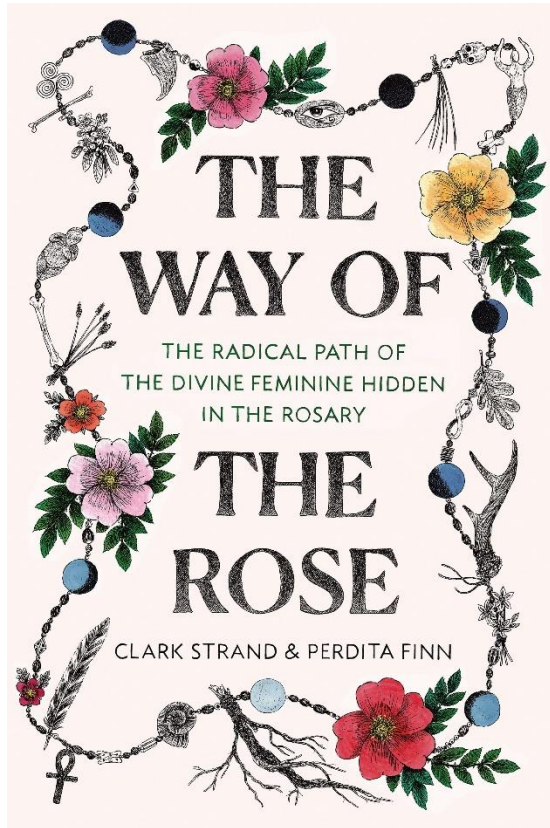
But I know, and I know when I know. And I have received my Divine Feminine marching orders, and therefore, I'm a *Prayer Artist*. And everything I do, absolutely everything I do is about prayer. Prayer for me is the vibration of love. That's when I know I'm praying is in my whole body is vibrating and singing a song of love. That is prayer.

So it's perfect, it's so perfect that today, December 5th, as we step into this last month of the year... and for those in the Northern Hemisphere, we're coming closer and closer to the sacred Winter Solstice, which is the heart of prayer, the heart of spirituality for our ancestors for tens and tens of thousands of years.

So Mother Earth, if we just pay attention, is calling us to stop, be still, be silent, enter sleep, sacred sleep, learning from her how she sleeps. And how she sleeps is nourishing, in the silence, in the dark, in the black earth, these new seeds of life. You can't see them. You can't plant them. You can't predict them, but the Mother is holding them. And spring will come.

We could not have a more perfect moment to open our hearts to this mother, our mother, Mother Earth. Call her by any name you want. Today, we're going to call her Our Lady. She is the goddess in all her beautiful black faces, and today she is going to help us remember how she taught us to pray thousands and thousands of years ago, maybe even as our human ancestors began to awaken to the Winter Solstice.

So I have a Winter Solstice, December, Our Lady prayer gift for you. I think this is the most exciting prayer I could possibly give you at this time of year because you are about to meet Clark Strand and Perdita Finn, authors of a book that has come [voice cracks]... see? I can't even... I knew I wasn't going to make it through this show without crying, so I might as well just get right to it. They are the authors of a book that has completely transformed my personal prayer life, and it is about to transform yours. The book is called *The Way of the Rose, The Way of the Rose*, but you've got to listen to the subtitle: *The Radical Path of the Divine Feminine Hidden in the Rosary*.



Are you surprised? Come on. I know you're surprised that Janet Conner, a woman you have heard say so often was raised strict Irish Roman Catholic and swore she would never touch those patriarchal prayers again... how is it possible that I, a *Prayer Artist*, have completely fallen head over heels in love with the rosary? Well, you can blame it on my guests [laughter], and an hour from now when *Sofia*, that fabulous group in Minnesota, repeats that theme song, you too will have fallen in love.

Sit down. Get ready. Love is coming. She's knocking at the door. And when you start praying this ancient pre-patriarchal goddess worship in the rosary, you too will discover what this song is really saying. You are not praying; you are being prayed, and you are being prayed at the speed of love.

This is the fastest... this prayer just... you can't even breathe to keep up with it. It will rearrange your life at the speed of love. So in this conversation there is something waiting just for you. There's a reason you're here. Some nugget of love, some ancient ancestral memory, something is hovering in the air waiting to enter your heart and transform your life. So let us begin this conversation listening to the voice of the Tibetan bowl, another ancient prayer, as she calls us to open our invisible ears that we may hear what wants to be heard.

[the bowl rings]

I think that's the softest she's ever been. I'm not even sure that that picked up on the camera's microphone. It's very gentle. Mind you, she's about to rock your world, but still it was a very gentle, gentle call. So this is the first time, but I promise you not the last, that you're going to meet Clark Strand and Perdita Finn on *Praying at the Speed of Love*. So I thought you might like to know how they fell into my life, and they fell, fell, fell into my life. And you can blame it on Mary Magdalene.

I think you all know that I co-led two Mary Magdalene intensives this year with the brilliant voice of the Divine Feminine, Reverend Meghan Don. So as I was creating the handbook for our second one, *Mary Magdalene as the Black Madonna*, I asked her if she had any reading recommendations for the bibliography. She said, "Yes. One, one. *Waking Up to the Dark* by Clark Strand."

Well, I bought it. I started reading it, and within an hour, I was out of my chair screaming, screaming as I'm walking around the living room, going, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" because everything I know is true is in that book. But I never see all these things in books, and never all in the same one. The Divine is feminine. Can I get an amen? Yes. The Divine Feminine speaks. Yes. She speaks to us in the middle of the night. Yes, yes, yes, yes. The earth is her body. Yes. Our body is her prayer. Life is a prayer, and patriarchy, domination that is destroying Mother Earth, has to end. It has to end or humanity ends. And there's a chapter on the Black Madonna. Absolutely everything I adore is in this little black book.

So I get out of my chair. I go, "Who is this guy? Who in the world is this guy?" So I go online. This whole thing happened in a matter of a couple hours. And I Google Clark Strand, and I am looking at his website. And there at the top is the cover of a new book coming out with Perdita Finn, his wife, and it's called *The Way of the Rose*. Now, this gave me some pause. The rosary [laughter], the rosary? How does an ex-Buddhist monk pray? The rosary.

Now, the rosary for me has been a problem. I mean, aside from saying a few ten thousand of them on my knees around the dining room table with my mother, I used to lie in bed in college and hear my parents on their knees around their beds saying the rosary for the salvation of my soul. Thanks, Mom and Dad. So when I turned 19, I left the Catholic Church, and I thought I would go to my grave never touching that thing again.

However, I have a rosary. When my mother died in 2007, I was given—I don't know why—her favorite picture of Mary hanging over her bed that she got in Florence in 1956. And I don't know. My sister sent it to me. I got her rosary, and I

draped her rosary over this very pretty picture of Mary. And I still never intended to touch it [laughter].

But I think the rosary's been waiting for me. And you know what? The rosary has been waiting for you because the rosary has been waiting for all of us, not just ex-Catholics. It's been waiting for everyone for thousands and thousands of years. So I am so thrilled to welcome Perdita Finn and Clark Strand, joining us from their home in Woodstock, New York, smack in the midst of the book tour for *The Way of the Rose*. Welcome.

Clark Strand Thanks, Janet.

Perdita Finn Thank you so much, Janet.

Janet Conner Oh. Well, we got to start with a prayer, right? Let's start with a prayer.

Clark Strand Sure.

Perdita Finn Well, how about we say the Hail Mary, but how about we imagine, in honor of the goddess, in honor of The Lady, that this is not a patriarchal prayer. But this is a prayer to the maiden, the mother, and the crone, the triple goddess, and that our ancestral mothers and grandmothers knew that. And they knew that when they called her, she showed up.

We sometimes joke that people might say their Shiva Mantra in yoga class, and they don't expect Shiva to show up. But Mary, when you say the Hail Mary, she shows up [laughter]. So we're going to call her and say the Hail Mary and watch her show up. How about that?

And we're going to know that we call... maiden is the woman with the Lord. The mother carries the child in her womb, and it is the crone who takes us back into her body at our death.

Clark/Perdita *Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.*

Perdita Finn Or a-women, as a friend of mine says [laughter].

Clark Strand Amen and a-women.

Janet Conner A-all. Oh, mm. Thank you so much for opening us with prayer. This is all about... that's all I care about is prayer, and the first question I always ask

everybody is, "So what's your story?" Now, Clark, you have the most outrageous prayer story, so take us to Arkansas, okay, and how were you taught to pray as a child? And then, okay, if you haven't heard this story before, listeners, you really better settle into your seat here because you're about to hear how a boy from Arkansas becomes a Buddhist monk and ends up praying the rosary.

Clark Strand Well, it's a long story. I'll give you the short version of it. I mean, I grew up praying by rote. I was taught rote prayers when I was a child, right, and I think the first prayer I was taught is, "Now I lay me down to sleep," right, "I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." So, basically, I was raised, being taught by my parents, that I could quite easily die in my sleep [laughter], right, so I had that thought to sort of guide me off into slumber each night.

And we were Protestant, good Protestant folk. My father had been trained as a Presbyterian minister, and then we went to church, very much enforced stillness and all that. I did not have a very good time in church. I couldn't be still for one thing. I didn't want to be still.

Perdita Finn So that's why he became a Zen monk.

Clark Strand Right. Of course. Yeah. That's right because, of course, you don't ever have to be still in Zen [laughter]. But starting about the time I was eight or nine years old, I started to wake up in the middle of the night, and I would just lie in bed. And it was very quiet, and it was very dark. If there were any monsters under my bed, they never bothered me. And I got so used to being awake at that time that at a certain point, I think I just thought, "Wow. The night's beautiful. I love being outdoors. Why not just step outside?"

So I would get up, and I would wander around the nearby golf course in the middle of the night. And this went on for years and years, even through my teens. By the time I was a teen, I was walking like five miles in the middle of the night, and it continued all the way through my twenties.

Eventually, I became a Zen Buddhist monk living at a remote Zen monastery in the Catskill Mountains, and I would get up in the middle of the night there and go out to the graveyard and do Buddhist chants and stuff like that. And I basically continued in that mode and that pattern of going to bed, waking up in the middle of the night, and spending some time in contemplation, sometimes in prayer, sometimes chanting. And this went on for years, but I never really thought of it as being... I don't know. It was just something I did. I didn't think it was anything particularly special.

Eventually, I began to do some research for *Waking Up to the Dark*, and I realized this was a very ancient pattern and that, in fact, people had been waking in the middle of the night to pray in religions all around the world. Every religion had a tradition of waking in the middle of the night to pray.

So I eventually quit being a monk. I wanted to get married and wanted to have children, met Perdita. And, eventually, we moved to the Catskill Mountains, and that's when things really, really changed.

Now, on the night of June 15, 2011, I didn't have one single book on the Divine Feminine anywhere on my bookshelf, except for *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, which to give you some idea, I didn't realize, even after reading it twice, was about the Divine Feminine [laughter]. Anybody who's read that book, he talks about the mother like on every page, but some of that went right over my head.

So that night I was about to go out for my usual walk. And I put my hand on the doorknob and was just about to leave, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. And a male voice said, "Don't go out tonight. Stay inside and be very, very still." And, yeah, I thought, "Well, I'll do that." I mean, it was a beautiful night, but I don't hear things like that very often, only once before that in fact. So I thought, "Well, I'll follow that advice."

So I got very still, got into my sort of Zen monk mode and made my mind very still. And I propped myself up on the couch, and after about 45 minutes, I felt the presence of someone there in the room with me. And I opened my eyes. I saw two reed stalks blowing gently, as if in an invisible breeze, like in the middle of a marsh perhaps. And then they vanished, and in their place was the face of a girl of about 17 years old. She had a round face, freckles around her nose, hazel eyes, auburn hair cut short, and she had a X of black electrical tape over her mouth.

Now, I'd been trained as a Zen monk to meditate through anything without losing my cool, so I just stared at her. I'd been taught... my Zen master said, "If you just sit there and look at things like that, they'll go away," right? He says because it's just what the Buddhists call *makyo* or illusion, right? So I thought, "All right. I'll just stare her down," and that did not work. And after a minute of looking into her eyes, which were very urgent—she had the most urgent expression in her eyes—I realized, "Oh, to hell with this. This is unprecedented. My Zen master obviously never met his lady. So I'm just going to ignore what he said, everything I've been taught." And I reached forward, and I guess that was the moment when I realized, "Oh, so whatever *makyo* is, that's not this. This is not illusion. This is real."

So I leaned forward, and I peeled the tape back. And I could actually feel the tape peeling off her skin. It came off with resistance, not so much that would've caused her pain, but I could feel the tug of her flesh as I pulled it off. And then there was

this deep gasp. It was like a sound of air rushing into a crypt that had been sealed for thousands of years, right, and she drew in this enormous breath that was much too big for the size of her body. And I immediately started to speak to say, "Who are you?" I mean, that was the question that was foremost in my mind. But she kept her eyes locked with mine, and she shook her head once very slowly to indicate that, no. This time there is nothing to be said. This is it. This is the event.

Now, I would love to say that I sat there devotedly looking at her for another 20 or 30 minutes, but the Zen monk part of my brain roped me back in. And a moment later, I closed my eyes, and when I opened them 30 minutes later, she was gone. But she showed up again, and she began to speak. And that changed my entire life.

Ten weeks later, she woke me with the words, "If you rise to say the rosary tonight, a column of saints will support your prayer." And I always joke that I wasn't Catholic but also wasn't stupid. The only figure who invited me to pray the rosary and made promises based on whether you did it or not was Mary. So I guess that that was the moment when I realized, "All right. My life is completely changed. I'm never going to become Catholic. I'm always going to say the rosary." And that's the short version of the story [laughter].

Janet Conner Well, and to read the long version, people have to get *Waking Up to the Dark*. But we want to hear Perdita's prayer story. What's yours?

Perdita Finn Well, I think every prayer story begins a long, long time before we're born in this life. And I think that my prayer story... the realization is that I came into this life already with certain devotions and prayers. I was born into a 1960s bohemian family. My father had been raised Irish Catholic, had broken with his family, had married an English woman, who he lived with in the 1940s much to their horror, and, the last thing, my father refused to let my grandmother take us to church.

I had never even seen the inside of a church. I had no religious instruction. I was given no prayers, I was given no religious imagery, no bible stories, nothing to hold onto.

Clark Strand Except the great books.

Perdita Finn Well, literature [laughter], Shakespeare, and anxiety, and tremendous anxiety [laughter]. And I have a book. The next book I'm writing is about my prayer journey and my prayer story and the story, but interestingly, as a small child, I found somehow a figurine, a broken statue of Our Lady of Sorrows.

And as a little girl, my father would come home from the hospital. He was a doctor, an emergency room surgeon. And I remembered as a little girl, when he came home in the middle of the night, we would often have cereal together. He'd

wake me up, and we'd have Frosted Flakes at midnight together. And he'd tell me stories in the middle of the night, just him and me. I'd be a little girl of three, and we'd eat our cereal together. And it was our magic time. And that was it. That's all I knew.

The year before my father died at 84, he told me another part of that story I did not know. That when he came home in the middle of the night, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, the whole house would be quiet, and I would be up in my room on my knees in front of the statue. And it so terrified him and so upset him and so freaked him out that here he was trying to raise this modern girl, this child free of religion and shame, and there I was [on my knees with?] the Virgin Mary. And so he had to distract me. And I have that statue still. I found her when this all began, this journey for us, and she is on my altar now. And I guess I came into this life loving her with my heart, and it's taken most of my life to find my way back to her. And my mission is to help people find their way to her sooner.

Now, I will say there's a lot of journeying. I converted to Catholicism for about 10 minutes in college. I read Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. I got involved with social justice and liberation theology. I was a social justice activist. I was involved in the nuclear freeze movement. And it seemed meaningful and purposeful, but sex, abortion, and birth control kicked me out about three minutes later.

And I ended up doing Zen... I, like Clark, went to Zen Buddhism. But I got kicked out of the Zen monastery too [laughter] because I tried to nurse in the Zen monastery. I became a young mother, and I could sit there with my snuggly on. And I could pull out a boob and nurse a kid in full Zazen. Why not? Oh man, did all hell break loose. And if you think... Maria Lactans is not what they wanted at the Zen monastery.

Clark Strand Yeah. Zen is not exactly a free the nipple movement.

Perdita Finn No, it's not. And so I ended up... and then we tried to go to the Episcopal Church, and ex-Zen nothing that I am, I ended up teaching Sunday school. And I realized that the kids were a lot of fun, but the grown-ups were kind of stuck in the mud. And then one day we were driving to the Episcopal Church, and our 10-year-old daughter just sighed in the back of the car and said, "I hate Jesus." And that was it [laughter]. We stopped the car, turned around.

Clark Strand That is not the point.

Perdita Finn We came home [laughter]. We said, "No church."

Clark Strand We're going to do religious home schooling from now on.

Perdita Finn So we did spiritual home schooling, and what that involved, and I cannot tell you why, I had to learn the rosary. And I started praying the rosary when I put the kids to bed at night because I loved it with my whole heart. And people have said to me, "Why?" and I said, "Because I loved it." And I treated the prayers and the mysteries as *Zen koans*.

Now, I thought I would never find another ex-Buddhist, ex-Catholic nothing praying the rosary, and now there are thousands and thousands of us all over the world. So that's my miracle. I didn't get a vision. I didn't have apparitions. But I asked Our Lady for something, and she answered me. And that's how I know she's real.

Janet Conner But it's so interesting is both of you had these experiences in the middle of the night.

Perdita Finn Both did, yeah.

Janet Conner Right? One is waking and walking. The other one is being fed Frosted Flakes, but it's still the middle of the night. There's always such an interesting thread in these stories. And the listeners have heard my Episcopalian story, but you haven't heard it, Perdita, so I just want to give you a little fun confirmation of this. The kids are so smart, but we stay in our patriarchal lane and start dragging them to churches and doing things because that's what we were dragged to do.

So I did try... when I got pregnant, I just went, "Oh, I have to give a spiritual life to my son. I have to," and the only thing I knew was Catholic, the only thing I knew was Catholic. So I'm ashamed to say this, but I had him baptized Catholic because my father said, "If you don't do it, I'll come do it in the middle of the night." And, okay [laughter]. "I'll do it. We'll do it." And I dragged this poor infant until I just couldn't do it anymore. I just can't do this anymore.

So I asked myself, "So where do ex-Catholics go when they don't want to be Catholics anymore?" And the only answer I could come up with was Episcopalian. I didn't even know anything else. It's like, "Well, if you're not a Catholic, you're a Protestant." I mean, I had a pretty limited... so there's a cute—and it is adorable—little Episcopalian Church around the corner, so I went a couple times. And I thought, "This is great. I know when to stand, I know when to sit. And it's in English. [inaudible] Latin. This is great. I can do this." And I bring my three year old, who's now just learning to talk, and he's three.

So he's standing on the pew at the very end. Whether it's Catholic or Episcopalian, there's a benediction at the end, and the priest says, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." And I'm holding his cute little fat chubby three-year-old hands, and I'm putting them on his forehead. "In the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"—at least we don't say Holy Ghost anymore—"amen." And I put his little hands together. The church, of course, is completely silent, and my three year old looks up at me and says, in a loud theatrical whisper, "Where's God the Mother?"

Perdita Finn Oh, beautiful. Oh my gosh.

Clark Strand Wow.

Janet Conner And I did the same thing. We went back home [laughter].

Perdita Finn Done!

Janet Conner And I asked myself, "What the hell, Janet. Where is God the Mother?" So here I am. He's now 30, so it's taken me 27 years and your book to find God the Mother.

Perdita Finn Well, Janet, you know what I say? I say, "In the name of the Father," and I touch my forehead. "In the name of the Child," and I touch my womb, not the Son because if we don't got daughters, we're not having any more children. "In the name of the Child," and then I touch each breast and say, "Holy Mama [laughter]," because that's [Wicca?].

Janet Conner That is perfect; however, Father O'Rourke did not do that.

Perdita Finn No. I know.

Janet Conner So the thing that is so glorious, in one sentence, about this book, about praying the rosary, is that it's not Christian. That it is a pre-Christian offering, acknowledgment, communion with the goddess. And then connected to that is... and I should've figured this out, Clark, but I didn't until I read your book because, as a good little Catholic girl, we know about Fatima. We know about Lourdes. I mean, Mary's showing up an awful lot telling children to pray the rosary. Well, so if it's an ancient goddess worship but we think this Catholic mom is telling us to say the rosary, there's something going on here. So would you fill us in? Now, I know people need to read the book to really get more, but what is sort of the high points of the history of the rosary?

Clark Strand Well, we don't really know where the rosary began. I mean, it sort of began everywhere at once in the Catholic world. It seems to have. We can't point to a particular country and say it began here or began there. But we do know that there is an older rosary that predates that one, and that one goes back so far into the past, it's impossible to say, really, even how long ago it started. And it begins with roses.

For some reason, roses were identified very early on as a flower particularly connected to the Divine Feminine. Roses are the oldest cultivated flower, and so

it's hard to say when people first started this tradition that a lot of Catholics know as quaintly by the term May Crowning, right? This goes back thousands and thousands of years. Before roses were sacred to Mary, they were sacred to Venus, and before Venus, they were sacred to Isis. Before Isis, they were sacred to Inanna, and before that, we really just don't even know.

In the areas where the rosary became the most popular around Europe, there are sites, archeological sites, where they have found Paleolithic figurines of the mother goddess dating back 30,000 years.

Perdita Finn Including Lourdes. And I think these are some of the things that people don't realize is these places where the Virgin Mary is showing up, she's been showing up for tens of thousands of years.

Clark Strand A long time.

Perdita Finn We went to visit the Black Madonna of Rocamadour. Her chapel is right by a Paleolithic chapel with art from 30,000 years ago. People have been coming in devotion to the Mother in these places, not just before Christianity, but before religion, before agriculture, [crosstalk] civilization.

Clark Strand And it's not even really just Europe too. The Sanskrit word for rosary, right, is a *mala*, a *japamala*. And *japa* means muttering, and *mala* means a garland. So it's a muttering garland, right? And so the beads were eventually substituted for these flowers. And so although for thousands and thousands of years people's devotion was to bring these chaplets or garlands of flowers you'd hang around the goddess's neck like Kali or to place as a crown on her head as they do with Mary and the various goddesses of western descent, eventually, beads came to substitute for those flowers. And prayers became associated with the mantric prayers, both in India and in Europe as well. So that's really kind of the origin of the rosary we have today. It goes back a really long, long time.

Perdita Finn But there are a lot secrets hidden in the rosary, and we write about all these in our book. It's a kind of *Da Vinci Code*-experience we had with it, and I think the church has been trying to hide things in plain sight for a long time. You don't want someone to find something? Just leave it out on the table and nobody looks at it.

Clark Strand A [purloined?] letter [laughter].

Perdita Finn And one of those is if you take a rosary and you hold it from the top and you hang it down... you've got your rosary, and you hang it in a circle with the pendant hanging down and the cross at the end, it makes the symbol for woman. It's the symbol for Venus, and it's the ankh which was the symbol for all life. You look at hieroglyphs of Isis, and she's holding an ankh in her hand. And we don't know

how old the rosary is. The church wants to tell us it began with Dominic, which is actually patently not true. It happened—

Clark Strand Much more complicated than that.

Perdita Finn It was a folk practice of folk people who were hiding their devotion to the goddess in plain sight. They were being told by the church they were not allowed to love their Mother, and they were finding a way to love her anyway.

And the thing that's interesting, and it's one of the things I find when I talk particularly to Catholics who grew up with the rosary, is how the rosary became used as a weapon against women. The very thing they had to sustain them, to hold onto their mother, then was turned against them and used as... particularly after Vatican II, the rosary become very public. It's "We're going to all pray it against communism or against abortion." And, actually, what happens is that kills the rosary as a private devotion.

Clark Strand Yeah, yeah. And Mary herself is also used against women. The conventional image, pious, compliant, silent, submissive, right, obedient version of Mary that you see in a lot of churches today, the sort of pale, washed-out, pastel-clad Mary with the downcast eyes.

Perdita Finn I call them Valium Virgins.

Clark Strand Valium Virgins. Right. [inaudible].

Janet Conner Well, it is disgusting. The church is now bleaching, repainting these magnificent... [they're all black?].

Perdita Finn I wrote about this horror at Chartres. They took Our Lady of the Pillar, one of the most powerful Black Madonnas in Europe, and they turned her into a Kewpie doll with a white face, rosy cheeks. I mean, I will say, I almost thought I was going to vomit when I saw her. And yet, we prayed prayers in front of her and every one was answered.

Clark Strand Yup. So she's still there.

Perdita Finn So you do what you want to her. Her power doesn't go away.

Clark Strand You can bleach a Black Madonna's face white, and her heart's black, not black-hearted, but dark and fertile, like the soil, right, and very powerful. So that doesn't go away. You can't [crosstalk].

Perdita Finn But one of the things when we started to investigate the rosary was all this hidden lore about it. Ours is only the second book that we know about the rosary written not by Catholics.

Janet Conner Oh.

Clark Strand The other was written by a woman named Eithne Wilkins, who is an English scholar—

Perdita Finn Jungian analyst.

Clark Strand —Jungian... was she a Jungian analyst?

Perdita Finn Yes.

Clark Strand Oh. Didn't know that. And she was one of the principal translators of Kafka into English. She was a really, really amazing scholar, and she pulled together everything she could find about the rosary from ancient times to modern and just threw it all into this book, kitchen sink and all. It's a hard book to read because it's so dense, but she was—

Perdita Finn She was on to something.

Clark Strand —she was on to something. She really was.

Perdita Finn And she had this intuition. She said, "Oh. This is the most powerful feminist devotion in the world." And she saw the rise of feminism in the 1960s, and she said, "The rosary's going to explode. We've been waiting." And, of course, that's not what happened.

Clark Strand People starting practicing TM instead.

Perdita Finn Well, the TM is... but they went to Buddhism instead. They jumped ship on one patriarchy and got stuck in another. And guess what? The priests in that religion were doing the same things as the priests in Catholicism. And my rule is no more priests, no more priests, and no more property, no more building funds, no more annual giving. I mean, the Mother's way is very different.

Clark Strand Yeah. That's one of the things in our *Way of the Rose* groups that we started that meet face-to-face and also meet on Facebook pretty much 24/7, 365 a year, *The Way of the Rose* on Facebook... in our groups, we value circles of friendship, not lineages of power and authority. And so we don't collect any money because we don't really need any money. All you need's a rosary and a friend.

Perdita Finn And you can... the first rosary Clark ever had was made for him with purple plastic pony beads and pink plastic cat beads that I found around the house and gave to him, and the terrible thing is he didn't keep it [laughter].

Clark Strand No, I didn't.

Perdita Finn And it was so cute.

Clark Strand I know. I looked for that rosary. I wish I still had it.

Janet Conner So what makes it so radical, and... how did you say this? The most powerful feminist devotion in the world is the Hail Mary.

Perdita Finn It is.

Janet Conner Now, you gave us a taste of that at the beginning, but could we... because this just changed everything for me. And I didn't know this. I did not see, and I am devoted to the goddess. I am devoted to the maiden, the mother... and I say myrrhophore rather than crone because crone's [crosstalk].

Perdita Finn Oh, I like that.

Janet Conner Isn't it a magnificent term? It actually comes from a British book on sacred oils that the myrrhophore lineage is the ancient priestess lineage that goes back in all time, and the Queen of the Myrrhophores is Mary Magdalene. And plus I sort of like the alliteration of maiden, mother, myrrhophore. So this is everything that I'm all about. How did I not see that the Hail Mary is exactly this? So would you do it again? Teach us the Hail Mary and help us see and feel these three. We begin with the maiden. We honor the mother. We returned to the myrrhophore for life, death, rebirth.

Perdita Finn So the first line of the Hail Mary, which was often the first mantra, which was the angelic salutation... it's what the angel says to Mary. It's when he calls... he says, "Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you." But let's stop there for a minute. So we've got, "Hail Mary, the Lord is with you." Male and female, sunlight and earth.

Have you ever seen those Tibetan *thangkas* that show the god and the goddess in congress together? They're having sex. They really are the Lord and the Lady together. That's where life is going to come from. Without that fertility, without that union, without that sexuality, without desire, nothing grows, nothing happens, and so it's the celebration in that of Mary's fertile power. She's that maiden power. And then—

Clark Strand Well, let's stop there for a second because let's not rush through this because this is very powerful stuff. So if you look at paintings of the Annunciation, which is what that angelic salutation is about, that first, oldest part of the Hail Mary, Gabriel the angel is often down on one knee. It's like he's proposing, right, like he's come to honor her. She is Mary the Queen of Angels, but he's honoring her in her maiden state. She's powerful. She is a virgin, not in the sense of being chaste, but in the sense of being powerful, and he kneels before that power and honors it.

Perdita Finn Let me just say the word virgin, and this is such a complicated word is that, again, this is another one of these words that gets turned as a weapon against women. Virgin is originally derived from the same meaning as virility, and it means power. These women were independent women with power. The goddess Athena, she could have lovers. She could have husbands, but nothing diminished her independence and her power.

To call Mary a virgin, a *Parthenos*, is to say she's the whole package. This is as big as it gets. She can bring life forth from within her. She can do whatever she wants. It has nothing to do with sex, and I feel that's really important because I think women have been taught to experience their bodies and their sexuality as shameful and wrong. And I mean, I'm a mama, and my message to young women is you have a right to your sexuality, your sexual desire, your sexual pleasure. And that Mary, if we reclaim her, has that right too, and she says yes to it.

Clark Strand So it's all about sex and fertility, but she's not required to be sexual or fertile, right?

Perdita Finn Exactly.

Clark Strand She has the choice, right? A woman's right to choose begins with the angelic salutation. That's what it's all about, right?

Janet Conner Say that in a Catholic church. The woman's right to choose begins with Mary.

Clark Strand Yeah. Exactly. Well, this is another one of those rosary secrets that's hidden in plain view. The angelic salutation celebrates a woman's right to choose. That's what it's all about, right there in the Hail Mary.

Janet Conner Okay. You have totally confirmed this subtitle. The subtitle of this book is a big deal: *The Radical Path of the Divine Feminine Hidden in the Rosary*. Okay. That was just the first line. How about the second?

Perdita Finn Okay. So Hail Mary... the Lord is with thee... "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Now, later the church would add Jesus, like the fruit of thy womb is Jesus. But really, they don't define that in the beginning with the Hail Mary.

Clark Strand No, that's not part of the prayer.

Perdita Finn The fruit of thou lady's womb is life itself. It's the planet.

Clark Strand This is the Great Mother, right?

Perdita Finn The Great Mother is going to give birth to everything, and she's the mama. And that is the mama who goes to Elizabeth. I mean, this is the second mystery of the rosary. The first is the Annunciation. So this is a woman's storytelling tradition.

Then we go, and Mary goes to her cousin Elizabeth, the young woman pregnant, miraculously. She's defied patriarchal law. Patriarchal law tells her that if she chooses to have a baby without a husband, she can be murdered. She can be killed, and it's right. The power of that, the power to say, "Fuck you," to that is extraordinary. And she does it.

And then she goes and meets her cousin Elizabeth, an old woman who's also said, "Eh. I could still be fertile. I'm having a baby too." And these two women get together, and there's this famous thing in movies called the Bechdel test. It was developed by feminist critics, and they said, "In this movie, do two women talk to each other about something other than men they have a crush on [laughter]?" And well, they do. You know what Mary and Elizabeth talk about? They talk about social revolution.

That's the Magnificat. Two women get together and say, "We're going to do this. We're going to change civilization. We're going to upend the order of the world." It is the most radical, powerful, embodied... and that's what mothers do. It is mothers who change the... I mean, you want something to get done? Put a mama on it.

Clark Strand So that's the second line.

Perdita Finn That's the second [laughter].

Janet Conner Now, let's go into the Winter Solstice and death.

Perdita Finn Well, it's so funny. Some people get frightened of the death, and they get frightened of the dark. And we've been taught to prefer the light, and we've been taught to skip over the scary parts. But by making friends with the darkness and the dead, suddenly, death itself does not feel so scary anymore. And one of the things you learn in the dark is how safe you are in it and how comforted.

When we want to torture somebody, what do we do? We put them in cell with the lights on 24 hours a day. And we've done that to ourselves as a species. We're torturing ourselves. But Clark maybe you'd talk about the crone energy at the end.

Clark Strand Well, the second half of the... I mean, it's the last part of the Hail Mary but roughly equal in length to the first two parts is, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen." And the third part honors that death crone energy. This is the older mother, right? You might say even the grandmother, right? The old woman who closes the eyes of the dead and wraps them in their shroud, utters the spells and prayers over them, cares for their body, places it in the earth like a seed where it waits for new life.

And taken all together, the Hail Mary as a mantra... because that's basically what it is. It's a repeated prayer, right, that changes our entire state of consciousness. It begins with the darkness of the womb and ends with the darkness of the tomb, after which it begins again. And so the effect of repeating this prayer, this maiden-mother-crone, maiden-mother-crone, maiden-mother-crone, maiden-mother-crone cycle over and over and over again, which basically just replicates the pattern of the seasons, is that, eventually, the kind of ecological truth of eternal life, the eternal life of bodies being born and reabsorbed into nature over and over again, it gets in through your pores. It gets into your cells, and you develop a really deep and abiding faith in the fundamental rightness and goodness of life and of having a body, right?

You begin to realize that there's nothing wrong with having a body. There's nothing wrong with desire. There's nothing wrong with... Buddha talked about... he was so plagued by the idea of sickness, old age, and death that he went off and starved himself nearly to death, right, before he discovered the Middle Way. Because there's nothing wrong with bodies, so the Hail Mary teaches us to be in our body, teaches us to be animals again, right, to be one with the plants and the cycles of the seasons. And it convinces us really finally of the ultimate wholesomeness of that.

Perdita Finn The third mystery of the rosary is the Nativity. And we all know it. We all see it. It's ubiquitous. There's the little baby in the manger. But manger means "to eat," and it means the baby is born and placed in a manger. We're all placed in a manger. We're all going to be eaten. If we're lucky, we're going to be eaten by something.

Once a deer came into our yard. It had been hit by a car and died in our yard. It was very sad, but we all went out and prayed with her as she died. And there was a feeling of her offering her gift to us, which she did because she disappeared in two days.

Clark Strand Vultures and mice and coyotes came.

Perdita Finn Vultures came and the coyotes came. There wasn't a bone left.

Clark Strand Nothing was left so, so quickly. I think it took three days.

Perdita Finn And everybody fed... two or three days. The smell was intense. But the amazing thing was I read this great book called *The Animal Way of Death and Healing*. And a mouse dies, and a beetle finds that mouse body. And it gets on top of the body, and it does a dance.

Clark Strand A dung beetle.

Perdita Finn A dung beetle, and it dances—

Clark Strand Or undertaker beetle. Sorry.

Perdita Finn —because it means he's found a home, and he can have a girlfriend. And they can get married, and they can have babies. And this is it, and everybody starts celebrating and singing. And they go in, and they eat that body. And that body becomes their new life and their family.

Clark Strand Undertaker beetles, yeah.

Perdita Finn And that is the ecology of that teaching of the mother. The mother places her child in a manger. We eat [crosstalk].

Clark Strand A food trough for animals. That's what it is, a food trough.

Perdita Finn "You're all each other's food," she says.

Clark Strand So when Jesus says on the night before his crucifixion... he lifts up the bread and says, "Take, eat. This is my body." That is literal. The Eucharist is like a crash course in planetary ecology, right? But Christianity has drifted so far from its Pagan roots that it no longer understands that, and so it just becomes dead doctrine and dogma. It's not a way of understanding the rhythms of life and the rhythms of the world.

That's one of the reasons why we're in so much trouble today, we've drifted so far from our niche as a species that we've now become an ecological menace rather than participating in this cycle of ecological blessings, which sustains all life. We think we're in charge of it.

Janet Conner Well, that whole domination thing. "I gave you the earth to dominate." This is so radical. This is so exciting. For someone who only heard all that dogma and blah blah blah, you're the first people that have gotten me to open my eyes to see Catholicism as a Pagan religion.

Clark Strand It is. Yeah. The most Pagan of religion.

Janet Conner I go, "Wait a second. Wait a second. Wait a second." Maybe my mother and all her prayers for the salvation of my soul to bring me back to the Catholic... she used to say to me on the phone before dementia, "When are you coming back to the Catholic Church, dear?" And I would say, "I'm not, Mom. Now, how's the weather in Wisconsin?" It's like every conversation. "So when are you coming back to the church, dear?"

Perdita Finn Janet. No one has to come back to any church. Coming back to The Lady.

Janet Conner Bingo!

Perdita Finn And that's different, and we all come back to The Lady in our own way. And what I see is there's a huge difference between forest ecology and monotheistic theology. In a forest, there're mushrooms, there're mosses, there're trilliums, there're trees, there're rivers, there're birds, there're bears, there're foxes. All beings have different ways of expressing their devotion to the Mother. And we're going to all have different...

Diversity is the way a healthy ecosystem looks. It's got a lot of different life forms, but we have created a world with more and more homogeneity. And that's what monotheism asks for. It asks for homogeneity. And so one of the things we talk about at *Way of the Rose* is no shoulds. Call The Lady by whatever name you call your mama. And if you're praying in Sanskrit, and we're playing in English, we're going to figure stuff out, and we're going to cross-pollinate and do some fun stuff. And I think that is part of it too. And I think there... the word Pagan... I haven't found the word I like, but—

Clark Strand We sum it up within three words: ecology not theology, right? We're bottom up. We're grounded in nature, and in nature there are a lot of different ways to love. There are a lot of different things to eat, a lot of friends to have, right? There's not just one way to do things.

Perdita Finn Gender's a way more complicated than we could ever imagine. Everything is complicated.

Clark Strand And you don't have to like everything. You're in the forest, and there's some funky, strange-looking mushrooms over there. And you don't necessarily want to eat them. But they're doing their thing, and they're just fine. And not only that, if you really look into it and dig beneath the soil, you'd figure out that they're nourishing the entire forest right there as part of it, that they are contributing something vital without which the forest won't thrive. And we're all like that.

Janet Conner And that's the end of patriarchy is that there isn't just these gold stars on people's forehead. "I'm a Muslim. I'm a Jew. I'm a Buddhist. I'm a Catholic. I'm a Christian, I'm a blah blah blah," and stay in your little lane there. But to use your ecology... well, in the Mother, the Mother Earth, there is no—

Clark Strand That's right. That's right. I had an interesting thought recently about, since we were talking about the Hail Mary, this idea that God doesn't appear, like in the Annunciation, directly. The angel comes, you see a ray of light come down, you see a bird come out. These are all kind of disembodied assembles. But if you really unpack that and you really think deeply about it, what it really means is Jesus could be anyone's son. His father could be anyone, and it wouldn't matter because he's born of the Mother. He's born of the earth, right? He's born from below.

And so that's really... we don't have these top down or I don't think we need these top-down lineages of authority that want to specify everything and name everything and quantify everything.

Perdita Finn We say it sometimes very simply in our book, "Circles not lines." What would it look like to live in circles again instead of lines? I'm very tired. I hear a lot of people... someone asked me the other night at a talk we gave, "What about the fact that there are now women Zen masters?" And I said, "They're women being allowed to participate in patriarchy." And it's still valuing authority, lineages of power, strict hierarchies. There are levels of mastery and accomplishment, and everybody knows exactly where they stand.

And the problem with hierarchies is that these systems privilege the abuse of power. The institution becomes more important than the individual, and the care of the individual is often sacrificed. And the person at the bottom rung gets crushed under that power.

Clark Strand Yeah. And you get a bottom rung when you get hierarchies and levels. It sort of goes with the territory. It's the reason why we sit in the circle at our rosary meetings because it's like the round table. Then there's no head of the table, right? And also, when you're in a circle and you're going around and sharing and telling your story, whoever happens to be speaking is the person in charge, right? Or not in charge, necessarily, but the person who's privileged. You listen to them as they're speaking, and your turn comes. And you speak, and the others listen.

It's just the opposite of a room set up with all the cushions or chairs or pews facing the front. Then you've got someone up there, and by privileging what they say, you're automatically silencing everyone else in the room, right? And you don't even have to say that we have a policy whereby our members don't get to speak their hearts or tell their truth. It's just understood that you go into those settings without the permission to tell your story and speak your truth.

Perdita Finn I thought once, "What would happen..." the Zen master I studied with, he died from lung cancer because he smoked cigarettes. He had three ex-wives [laughter] and all like this. And I thought, "What if instead of all those robes and all those sonorous *koans*, he had come down off that pedestal he sat on and said, "This is how my heart is breaking." And that's what we do at *The Way of the Rose* because the Mother is there, and her invitation is, "What do you want? What do you need? What can I do?"

Clark Strand "What are you feeling?"

Perdita Finn "Who needs a cup of tea and a cookie?" And, "What are you feeling?"

Clark Strand Or, "What are you feeling?" Yeah.

- Perdita Finn And that, I think, the privilege to be broken, the privilege to need a mama. And that's how we become mums in the world.
- Clark Strand You know the real secret about patriarchy that the patriarchs will never share with you? This is the thing, and I know because I was on track to become a Zen master. I was in the Zen equivalent of the smoke-filled room where the decisions were made and the sausage was made, okay? The secret that the patriarchs won't tell you is that patriarchy doesn't work for the patriarchs. It just doesn't work. It doesn't really work for anyone, okay? And some of the most miserable people I have ever met were people in positions of spiritual authority.
- Look at all the priests, right, who find themselves just so broken that they're abusing little children, right, I mean, so terribly broken, so terribly broken. Look at how many scandals there are just everywhere you look. It's not just Catholicism. It's Buddhism. It's everywhere, right? The entertainment industry. These powerful people at the very pinnacle of their careers, the pinnacle of powers, are secretly miserable. Their lives aren't working. So we need a different way of approaching everything.
- Janet Conner So I want to ask you about the italics. There are 59 chapters for the 59 beads of the rosary. That's so adorable. And at the end of almost all of them, there are four or five italicized lines. And you two are pretty spectacular writers. I mean, you just create this river of words, and I'm getting in the boat. But then come these italicized lines, and they are written by another. They just rearrange your entire being. And then at the very end of the book, there are entire chapters of these italicized lines. And this is why it took me like three weeks to get through this book because it's so rich, and your brain is going, "Heh heh heh. Wh-wh-wh-what, what, what, what, what's happening here [laughter]?"
- Perdita Finn But, Janet, what you're describing so beautifully is exactly what happened to us when we heard those words. I used to say, "She is teaching me a new way of being and thinking and seeing. She's teaching me a new language." And people have often said to me, "How do you know Mary's real and your husband's not just having a midlife crisis?" And the way I know is I've been his editor for 27 years. I know how this man writes. I know which words he uses. I know how long it takes him to write a sentence. And what happens is, when Our Lady appears, I'm the scribe because Clark reports what she says, and I write it down.
- Janet Conner So, selfishly, I want to understand this because I'm awakened in the middle of the night. I do not turn on a light or anything, but I sleep with a yellow pad of paper. Some people sleep with people; I sleep with paper [laughter]. And I write down exactly what I hear, what I'm told, and then I always say, "Thank you." And I put the pen down below where I've been writing, and if I get awakened again, I roll

over in the dark, and I write it down. Then the next morning, I'll go, "Ha ha. Okay. Janet didn't come up with that." So is it always in the middle of the night? I mean, Clark, do you suddenly go, "Hey! Get a pad of paper"?

Perdita Finn No, no. She's orderly.

Clark Strand Yeah. I think in the first few years, she would speak at irregular times. She would speak at just about any time. Sometimes she would speak in the middle of the night.

Perdita Finn Usually when we're praying the rosary. You have to pray the rosary first. The psychics have often told us many psychics pray the rosary before they'll do a session because it opens the portal. It's famous for that.

Janet Conner I didn't know that.

Clark Strand And she told us at a certain point that she would... actually, I think two or three years ago, she said that she wanted us to say the first few beads of the rosary, until you get to the loop, before she would begin to speak. It changes your consciousness, and it's not just that she's trying to change my consciousness, which she can pretty much do at a moment's notice. She also wanted to change Perdita's so that she would be in a state of mind to listen and to write it down, to understand what she was writing. So this is kind of a ritual we follow whenever she speaks. We will—

Perdita Finn She speaks on the... she always has a message for the 16th of every month, and that's posted on our website, wayoftherose.org, and both in the Facebook group. It will always be at the top of... it's the first announcement pinned to the top. She offers a message, and there was a period of time, a three-year period, where she was speaking every five days and offering a message to the community every five days, which is very intense.

Clark Strand It began right after the election, yeah.

Perdita Finn Election. And [laughter] yeah. And a lot of those messages, the ones that went into the book, in the creation of the book, it was if she was training us to write the book.

Janet Conner So I have to go back to... you are blowing my mind on many, many, many levels. First of all, you've just explained what is my personal experience with praying the rosary. My journal is always open, and praying the rosary is now just a part of my deep soul writing, deep soul reading. Your book is deep soul reading.

Clark Strand Right. Makes sense.

Janet Conner And then at 1 o'clock, I say the prayer *They Are All Our Children* to close the concentration camps in America for the immigrants. And the rosary just *shoo*. Okay, as long as I'm up, I'm going to say the rosary. Now, my journal is open on the chair, and at first, I had to sort of scoot over to the journal and the book to go, "Now, what mystery are we on?" But then, it started to happen right away that I get my downloads. I get whole new ideas in the middle of the rosary, so I transfer it to my other hand. I've got to hold my spot. Write that down. I went, "Okay." Back. And I have to walk.

Perdita Finn This is our life, Janet.

Clark Strand That's the reason why... it's actually much easier for me and Perdita because you're doing both jobs. All I have to do is speak, and then she writes it down. You're trying to do both at once.

Janet Conner I have to do the whole thing. I'm alone in the living room.

Clark Strand You have to do the whole thing. You're multi-tasking.

Janet Conner And I have to walk in a circle, and so I am up, walking, talking, praying. But *shoo*. I mean, it could be six or seven times that I have to scoot over to my journal and go, "Okay." And it could be an important piece of information that I'm not praying about that in any way, shape, or form but boom. Because you just explained it, it opens the portal.

Clark Strand It does. That is exactly right.

Perdita Finn It does. It opens the portal. Jonathan Edwards, the psychic, wrote a whole book—

Clark Strand Not Jonathan Edwards. [crosstalk].

Perdita Finn John Edwards.

Clark Strand Yes. Jonathan Edwards was the guy who—

Perdita Finn No, no, no.

Clark Strand —preached the Far East religions.

Perdita Finn Oh, oh, oh. [inaudible]. He wrote a whole book about that and how he would pray the rosary. And I wrote a book with a psychic actually. I was fascinated by her and wrote a book about her. And what she said was that, "Everybody's psychic. Everybody's tapping in. I couldn't prevent myself from tapping in. Most of us get acculturated to stop doing this." But one of the things in *Waking Up to the Dark* that Clark wrote about was this used to be an ordinary experience for people in the middle of the night. It was what everybody was doing.

And we talk about the guidance we've lost that we need to regain. We need the guidance of the dead. We need the guidance of the spiritual realm. We need the guidance of the lost species. What about all those species that have gone extinct? We need their guidance to help protect the rest of life on earth. And I mean, that's one of my rituals is to them.

Janet Conner The other thing you said that is blowing my mind is that her messages came on the 16th.

Clark Strand Well, her messages... yeah. Go ahead.

Janet Conner Well, the 16 is The Tower in tarot. It is the collapse of patriarchy. It is one of only four of Pythagoras' karmic numbers. And the only reason I'm so aware of this is my birthday is the 16th, and right now I'm walking through a two-year, mystic 16 Tower of Love walk according to essence numerology. We don't have to go there, but I've got 16 on the brain.

So when Emma was teaching me about an essence 16, two years of this... and everything's changing. Everything is changing. I'm moving, what I write, my publisher, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. You guys show up saying the rosary. Everything is changing. And it's The Tower, so patriarchy is sinking into the ground. And your book gave me the visual: it's her mantle. Her mantle is now on the surface of the earth. And it's circular, and there's room for everybody. So I want to know more about the 16. What's your understanding?

Clark Strand Well, she speaks on... I mean, she will deliver a message at some point during the month. But when she has asked us to share the message is the 16th of every month, and that's because the first apparition occurred on June 16th.

Perdita Finn But there're two interesting facts about that that one we only just realized. And we were like, "Well, what happened on June 16th?" And we start looking around. We're sort of curious. We start doing historical research. It's Blooms Day. It's this. It's not really anything except for Clark happens to know that in 1972—

Clark Strand Yeah. It was the day that the UN declared that the earth had rights, that the earth had right of its own, right? So it recognized the rights of the earth.

Janet Conner You blew my mind with this. It's on page 66 in *Waking Up to the Dark*. And we should have a conversation just about that. This feels like Our Lady speaking. This feels and [crosstalk]—

Perdita Finn Doesn't it? It does to us too. We had the same experience.

Clark Strand What are you talking about?

Janet Conner Like who did [crosstalk] that?

- Perdita Finn The Stockholm Conference. The Stockholm Conference. Please read it. This is my creed.
- Clark Strand Oh, the Stockholm. Oh, yeah. Please read it. Yeah. That's amazing.
- Janet Conner This is like the greatest mystical teaching of all time, and it came through the UN. What?
- Clark Strand Friends of the Earth. Yeah.
- Janet Conner "Life holds to one central truth: that all matter and all energy needed for life moves in great, closed circles," womb to tomb, right, "From which nothing escapes and to which only the driving fire of the sun is added. Life devours itself. Everything that eats is itself eaten. Every chemical that is made by life can be broken down by life." This is a poem. "All the sunlight that can be used is used. Of all that there is on earth, nothing is taken away by life, and nothing is added by life. But nearly everything is used by life, used and reused in thousands of complex ways, moved through vast chains of plants and animals and back again to the beginning."
- Clark Strand Isn't that beautiful?
- Perdita Finn Janet, can I just say—
- Janet Conner This is sacred. This is sacred.
- Perdita Finn Can I just say something? That I too experience it as the most sacred writing I've ever read, and you're the first interviewer—that book came out four years ago—to get that.
- Clark Strand Yeah. It's true. It's true. That entire book was built around a few central passages. One, of course, was "The Gospel according to The Dark," which is Our Lady's words at the very end. One of the others was that passage. I first read that passage in a book on ecological writing and anthology, and I traced it back to its origin in *Only One Earth*, written by The Friends of the Earth, I think, for the Stockholm Conference in 1972 to be presented on the day that the conference ended and the rights of the earth were recognized formally by the UN.
- Janet Conner And that's the tone. These italicized... I try to read them but I can't. I just sit there sobbing and go, "Okay. Try to read again."
- Perdita Finn Me too.
- Janet Conner So if I had to pick one sentence that just sends me, just wah, is this. This is Our Lady speaking: "You must know that there are no limits on prayer because there was no beginning to prayer. At birth, you came in somewhere in the middle of a

great story of prayer that, because it forms a circle like the beads of the rosary, is truly without end."

Clark Strand Yup. That's it. That's it in a nutshell.

Janet Conner Imagine if children were taught that you have arrived somewhere in the middle of a great story, the great story of prayer, the great story of the Mother. That's it.

Perdita Finn That's everything, Janet. That's everything. That's it.

Clark Strand That's it.

Janet Conner That's everything. There are no limits to prayer because there was no beginning to prayer. Now, when I was awakened and heard this *Prayer Artist* thing, I was a little, "Huh huh. Okay. Uh mm. What does that mean?" And I went online and no one, right—how many gazillion Google searches are there—not one person on the planet used the term. Oh shit.

So I contacted the angels through my dear friend, Margo Mastromarchi, and I asked them about prayer. And I got so annoyed with them because they wouldn't just bloody answer the question, right? It was like, "Well, we'll show you." And then I'd say, "Well, is it this?" and they go, "Not exactly, dear." "And how about that?" "Not exactly." And finally, [inaudible] of the conversation, they took pity on me, and so it was kind of like Our Lady speaking. I don't understand this sentence at all, but this is it. The angels said, "Prayer is a vibration of love that goes beyond all universes."

Clark Strand Beautiful.

Perdita Finn Yep. Our Lady, she says in the book at one point, she said, "Your soul is too big to be contained by the universe. It's bigger than the universe."

Janet Conner Yeah. Get your head around that.

Perdita Finn Yeah, yeah. But it's also very comforting. And I think one of the things as we get... a very beloved friend of mine—I'd love you to have on your show—her name is HeatherAsh Amara. She's a teacher in the Toltec tradition, and she and I were out for a hike one day. And we were saying, "Well, what does it mean to get sober from patriarchy?" You know we were talking about that [laughter].

Clark Strand Because it's an addiction. Yeah.

Perdita Finn Patriarchy's an addiction. What does sobriety look like? And she said, very brilliantly, and I believe it, that it is knowing that you live in the long story of the soul and not in the short story of a single life. And that's that you arrive in the middle of a story, but the death is not the end. It's just another beginning. I mean,

life goes on and on and on. There is enough time for love. There is enough time for mercy.

Janet Conner Well, it's the long story of prayer that means you're a prayer. I'm a prayer. You're a prayer.

Perdita Finn You are the answer to prayer. You are the answer of prayer.

Janet Conner But the earth is a prayer, Mother is a prayer, the air is a prayer, the osprey is a prayer, the cockroach is a prayer. That's not one I'm particularly fond of, but hey. Everything is prayer. And so, of course, this totally freaks me out because you want me to be a *Prayer Artist*? What, what? Everything is prayer. This is sort of a big art form you're asking me to—

Perdita Finn It's an art form, and that's why, I think... what I think is really, really beautiful is when people become devoted to Our Lady, and we even see this in *Way of the Rose*, art happens. People start making art. She makes things beautiful. She makes forests. She makes fields of wild flowers. She makes migrations of butterflies, and she makes people start singing and painting and dancing.

Clark Strand And weaving and making rosaries.

Perdita Finn And writing and making rosaries and laughter and jokes and, suddenly, the world becomes that prayer, art. Prayer and artistry are intimately connected.

Janet Conner Exactly!

Clark Strand Creativity, yeah.

Janet Conner And she did it to me two weeks ago. Just as I was starting to say the rosary... and I sort of have a lot to do. I have to write three books, blah blah blah blah blah. Suddenly, I download a play, a play.

Perdita Finn This is what she does [laughter]. I know.

Janet Conner A play. And I'm obedient, so I type the thing and I edit it. And as I'm saying the rosary I get the next edit. "Oh, okay. Fine." So excuse me. Where am I performing this play, which is a play with a character named She and a character named He, honoring the end of patriarchy? This is a very dangerous prayer you're giving us [laughter].

Clark Strand Well, I mean, you have to... dangerous to who?

Janet Conner Oh and, of course, this is the danger you want, right? I mean, you cannot have more fun than obeying, following, opening, hearing, and creating any and everything she wants.

Perdita Finn But your life changes.

- Clark Strand It does.
- Perdita Finn Your life does change. And I think one of the things we've seen, and this is the second book that we will work on for a long time, is people do fear change.
- Clark Strand They do.
- Perdita Finn They feel frightened. And you have to... the rosary gives you something to hold onto in the middle of all that change.
- Clark Strand It does.
- Perdita Finn And Our Lady says, "Yes. We're going into the river. The current's going to be fast. We're going to move, but hold tight to my hand. I got you."
- Janet Conner Yeah. You feel that when you're saying the rosary because it's in your hands, and you have to move your fingers.
- Clark Strand It's tactile. Yeah. It's something to hold onto.
- Janet Conner Yeah. And then I find myself putting my hand out in space and holding her hand, so, "Okay. You got my hand over here. You got my hand over here. Here we go."
- Perdita Finn I go to sleep with my beads wrapped around my hand, do you know, because she said to me once, "Just remember, if you feel anxious at night, I'm holding you. Hold back. Squeeze back."
- Janet Conner Well, obviously, I think the listeners can tell that we do realize we have scratched the surface of this book. And so this is episode 19, and Clark and Perdita do have gifts for us in Prayer Bag #19. But I have asked them to, please, let's have episode two because we haven't gotten into the mysteries. We haven't gotten into the novena. Talk about a revolution. And so they have kindly said that, yes, they'll be back right before the solstice on December 19th for part two of *The Way of the Rose*.
- But tell us, when people come to janetconner.com/19... and I've been taking copious notes, so there's going to be a lot of fun things in that blue Prayer Action box. And there will be links to the book and *The Way of the Rose* Facebook page and their website and anything else they ask me to post for you. But when people click on the Prayer Bag, what's in there?
- Perdita Finn There're going to be two things. One'll be a chapter from the book with an original Pagan illustration of Our Lady by our incredibly talented young illustrator that a lot of people are using as a devotional image. But it will blow your mind. No one's seen it before so it'll be just for you guys.
- Clark Strand It's not in the book.

Perdita Finn Not in the book. It was not used in the book, so it's one of the outtakes from the book which is extraordinary. And then the other thing is that *Waking Up to the Dark* concludes with Our Lady's most powerful prophetic message which is called "The Gospel According to the Dark." Our illustrator illustrated it and the fall of patriarchy with images, and we're going to be giving you that as an image you can download, keep, use, do whatever you want to do with it.

Clark Strand And as well as the text of the gospel, done in calligraphy.

Perdita Finn And the text of the... the full text of the gospel done in calligraphy.

Clark Strand The art's done by Will Lytle, and the calligraphy is by Trevor Rossi.

Janet Conner Wow. Okay.

Clark Strand You can print it and distribute them.

Perdita Finn They're for you. You may print them. You may distribute them. You can do what you want with them.

Clark Strand You can use them to make announcements. There's a space to write your message.

Janet Conner Oh, oh. What magnificent—

Clark Strand Or your own prayer intention, a space to write your prayer intention.

Janet Conner So until we meet again, entering the Winter Solstice, would you like to send us off with a prayer?

Perdita Finn Well, why don't we... the rosary ends with a prayer, and we won't have to go into it. But we crown The Lady, and we put her at the center of the earth again. And we make heaven and earth one place again. We're not going anywhere. We're not leaving this world for heaven. Heaven is here with her crowned. And that's a beautiful prayer that we can say together called the Hail, Holy Queen. Some people knew it as the Salve Regina. Shall we say it together?

Janet Conner Yes, please.

Perdita Finn Slow.

Clark/Perdita *Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy!
Hail our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.
To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy towards us;
and after this our exile, show unto us the fruit of thy womb life;
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary*

*Pray for us, Holy Mother of God
That we may be made worthy of the promises of life.*

Clark Strand So do you want to do that again because I wasn't saying the same version as you were [laughter]?

Janet Conner Oh, I think we got Hail, Holy—

Perdita Finn They got it. They harmonized, we harmonized. We're so not about being perfect.

Janet Conner It's perfect. It does sound like a song. It really does.

Clark Strand Well, it is. It is.

Janet Conner A song. And in episode two, we're going to talk about that phrase, Mother of God. Talk about [crosstalk].

Perdita Finn That was my *koan* for 12 years.

Janet Conner Yeah. We're going there right before the Winter Solstice [crosstalk].

Perdita Finn It blows your mind, right?

Janet Conner Oh, everybody listening will want to come back for part two. So I always give the guests a little gift in gratitude. And I had one all typed up, ready to go, and then Sophia, the name of Our Lady for me, said, "That's not the right one, Janet. You have got to do 'All Night.'" And so I typed it up. "Okay, fine. We'll do 'All Night.'" But then as I was making my bed this morning, I went, "Well, of course, we have to do 'All Night' because it's in honor, not just of Mother Earth, but the fact that Our Lady would wake Clark up in the night." So this came June 5th of last year.

*On the breath of the Beloved come love songs
All day, all night, caressing the world
Love songs*

But we don't hear them

*Like pop licks, they grab our bodies and we move
Like Ode to Joy, they lift our spirits and we soar
Like Irish pipes, they squeeze our hearts and we weep*

But we don't hear them

*Every leaf, every star, every curl of ocean—
a love song
Every fern, every cloud, every spider web—
a love song*

*The rain sputtering
The storm clouds forming
The volcano erupting*

Love songs

*The sun arriving
The sun departing
The moon smiling all night*

Love songs

*The cicadas in Oaxaca pray for rain
All night, a cacophony of legs
And the rain comes*

*I sigh for you and you show your face
Your face
Your face in everything*

*Your face in what frightens me
Your face in what feeds me
Your face in my face in the mirror
Whether I look up or not*

Love songs

*Your breath in my breath
Your heart in my heart
Your love in all I love
whether I recognize you or not*

*We are one love
We sing one song
One love song all night*

All night

All night, though I may not hear it

*Your love song is all life
My love song is this life*

*Singing in beauty
Singing in pain
Singing in joy
Singing on my knees*

*One love
One song
Our song
All night*

Clark Strand Thank you, Janet. That's just beautiful.

Perdita Finn Oh, Janet.

Janet Conner Well, thank you. I think you inspired it, Clark, without my even knowing. Actually, I will leave you with a very bizarre... I'm just going to let the listeners talk about a *koan* that'll rearrange your life. After I wrote it... uh, Janet doesn't write these. After I took dictation, and I mean like several weeks later, I realized it was inspired by the rhythm of Beyoncé's... just let that [laughter]... Our Lady speaks through all voices including the goddess herself, Beyoncé.

Perdita Finn She does.

T. Frantzich This conversation in the mystic with *Prayer Artist* Janet Conner has been rated L.

[music] *You are not moving, you are being moved.*
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.