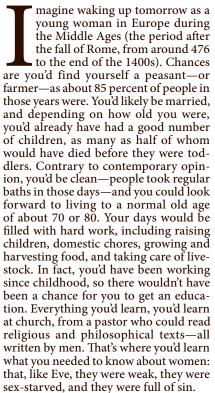


#### ART

# DR. ELEANOR JANEGA DELVES IN TO THE INTRIGUING LIFE OF HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Hildegard of Bingen was a philosopher, a mystic, and a rebel, making history during a time when women were rarely considered worthy of such an honor. Here, noted historian Dr. Eleanor Janega peels back the habit on one of the Middle Ages' most fascinating figures

BY ELEANOR JANEGA



Now imagine, instead, waking up as one of the three percent of people of the period who weren't peasants, but also weren't royals. These were the nobility—think of upper-class people today. You would have likely been married off to a man—not one you loved, but one who could be sure to help secure your family's political position or maintain their property. You'd also have plenty of children, many of whom would die, and while the peasants were growing all the food that kept you alive, you'd spend your days living it up, enjoying art, having fun at court, and wearing really nice clothes. You might have gotten an education, but you'd still get most of your learning from religious texts. And even as a noblewoman, you'd hold the exact same beliefs about women as peasants did.

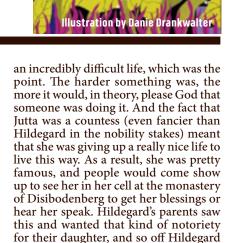
It was into this world that Hildegard of Bingen (c. 1098-1179), the most important medieval intellectual that you've never heard of, was born. Against all odds, she became a legend in her own time, and also in ours—in 2012, she was elevated to sainthood by Pope Benedict XVI. She was a scholastic powerhouse and the medieval equivalent of a triple threat in that she wrote religious texts, books about nature, plus music and plays. In her spare time, she also ran a nunnery that eventually got huge. Perhaps most importantly, she was able to challenge some of her society's deeply held ideas about women.

Hildegard was born to parents who had already had either 10 or eight children (who can keep track!), and by the time Hildegard came along they were surprisingly cool with the fact that she was the sort of kid who was having religious visions at the age of three. As she'd later write: "From my early childhood, before my bones, nerves, and veins were fully strengthened, I have always seen this vision in my soul...it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places." This was a lot for a little girl, and she didn't really yet have the vocabulary to explain that she felt like she was receiving these visions directly from God. So she kept a lot of this a secret. However, her obvious interest in religion meant that her parents were interested in encouraging her.

Ordinarily, girls from this level of society would get married off when they were in their early 20s. Since Hildegard was the youngest of a lot, her parents had already had a good chance to make political deals through marriage. Anyway, Hildegard was sick all the time, and it was likely that she would probably die in childbirth if she did get married, which pretty much invalidated the whole marrying for political power thing.

Since they didn't have to worry about getting something out of Hildegard through marriage, her parents decided that a religious kid was therefore a good thing for them. Having a child stashed in a nunnery constantly praying for the family was a good way to make sure that God was on your side when you died. Besides, there was also a cachet to having a child in the church, proving that your family definitely was very holy indeed. But Hildegard's parents didn't want to send their daughter off to any old nunnery—they went for the holiest possible option, and sometime between the age of eight and 14 (we don't know exactly when; medieval records aren't always super precise!) they sent her to live with Countess Jutta of Sponheim (1091-1136), who was an anchoress.

Anchoresses get their name from the Greek anachoreo, meaning "to withdraw," and were women who decided that they were so dedicated to the religious life that they were going to give up the luxuries of the world completely by enclosing themselves in cells. When someone decided to be an anchorite or anchoress in the German-speaking lands the local bishop would come and say the Office of the Dead prayer cycle for them, emphasizing that for all intents and purposes they were no longer living. Anchoresses would have people bring them food, clothes, and bathing products, but they stayed in their one little room or the church grounds. It was



went to hang out with Jutta. Jutta taught Hildegard the basics of literacy, which in the medieval period meant reading and writing Latin, but beyond that she didn't have a whole lot to offer. Education for girls in the medieval period was patchy. Most noble girls could read, but they often couldn't actually write, as they employed scribes to do that for them. In her life in the monastery, Hildegard also did a lot of nice things for her community like tending to the sick, singing psalms, and generally helping out around the place while Jutta stayed locked up. By the time Jutta died in 1136 Hildegard had been living in the cramped confines of Disibodenberg for 30 years while the community of religious women ballooned around her. Jutta had been so famous that a lot of other women wanted to come and live alongside her. But increasingly, Hildegard, her star pupil, was becoming notable in her own right.

The monk Volmar (d. 1173) had come to visit the community repeatedly and thought Hildegard was really talented. He began assisting her with her education, but also working on her biography. He wrote extensively about how intelligent and holy Hildegard was and sent out letters about her to anyone who



Photos courtesy of Obelisk Art History

would read them. This was the medieval equivalent of having an agent, but for sainthood. If someone was really holy and you thought that they had a chance at becoming a saint, you needed to chronicle everything about their life to prove how great they were when the church came calling for explanations about why someone was so popular. This made people start paying attention.

With Jutta gone, the women needed a new magistra, which was the equivalent of what we would call a mother superior. Hildegard was unanimously elected to take control. Now it was her turn to decide who worked in the garden and who was in the kitchen. She assigned women to copy texts in the library, or to scrub its floors.

Throughout this period, Hildegard continued to have visions, but kept them to herself. "I heard and saw these things, because of doubt and low opinion of myself and because of diverse sayings of men, I refused for a long time a call to write," she would later recall. But then, something changed. "And it came to pass...when I was 42 years and 7 months old that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance

flowed through my entire brain." Yup; there in the Middle Ages, it wasn't until Hildegard herself was practically middle-aged that she found the confidence to record her thoughts. That's when she began writing what is probably her most celebrated work, Scivias (Know the Ways), which she wrote from 1142 to 1151. In the Scivias, Hildegard first describes each of her visions, which she believed she was receiving directly from God, and then explains their theological meaning. These explanations are absolutely key as without them, it isn't always easy to understand what, say, the figure of a golden-winged personification of the church as a woman with a scaly and monstrous face covering her pubes could mean. In all, Hildegard's Scivias contains 26 of her visions and their explanations. It also includes one of her earliest musical compositions— "Symphony of Heaven."

Saying that Hildegard "composed" Scivias is important, because while she was the one who had and explained the visions, she never actually picked up a quill and wrote them down. Since Volmar could write much better than Hildegard could he was also really handy



to use as a secretary. In a world before the printing press, having a guy write out your ideas was how they started to circulate. After all, a book of visions was no good if no one actually read it.

The trouble with books like this was that the church also could take a pretty dim view of randoms popping up and saying that God was communicating with them. You never knew if you were dealing with a saint or a scammer, and Hildegard's stuff was getting so popular that the church started to get suspicious. Pilgrims had been going to see her for vears, and now that there were actual books of hers being circulated, her reputation was increasing daily. Medieval Europeans absolutely loved religious literature, sermons—anything about God. Hildegard had a brand-new way of relating to all of that, which people were really into, and the church needed to know what this woman was doing over in her weird little cell community.

As a result, in 1148 Pope Eugenius III (c. 1080–1153) sent a delegation up to Disibodenberg to check in on Hildegard

and establish whether she was producing material that the church could accept. They loved her. According to them, Hildegard's visions were the real deal, and they felt that she should be allowed to continue her work unimpeded. Eugenius sent Hildegard a letter from the council giving her his blessing, which was sort of like a rubber stamp to keep going with whatever work she wanted. So she followed up *Scivias* with the *Liber Vitae Meritorum* (*Book of Life's Merits*, written 1158–1163) and *Liber Divinorum Operum* (*Book of Divine Works*, written from around 1163–1174).

Meanwhile, back in Disibodenberg, the community had become enormous, and Hildegard asked if she and the other women could move to their own nunnery in Rupertsberg, about 39 kilometers north of there. According to her, God had demanded this, but it's probable that the uncomfortable conditions and some guy telling her what to do also played a part in both her and God's decision-making on this one.

However, the abbot of the monastery,

Kuno of Disibodenberg (died 1155), turned her down. He knew Hildegard was a star, and he wasn't about to let her go easily. Think Britney's conservatorship and you have an idea of what we're talking about here. People came from all around Europe to see and talk with her, and when they did, they usually left a donation to the monastery. The Holy Roman Emperor wrote Hildegard letters. Even the papacy was sending delegations up! There was nowhere for Hildegard's fame to go but up, which meant that this was only going to make more money for Disibodenberg.

It's at this point that God allegedly stepped in. According to Hildegard, God paralyzed her in retaliation. She could not move, she said, until she and her nuns were on their way to start their own community and that was that. Kuno got mad enough that he went and tried to physically drag Hildegard out of bed to prove her wrong. He failed, and suddenly he knew he was defeated. Having your prized resident laying on her back trash-talking you when visitors showed up was not the look that he wanted for Disibodenberg. He admitted defeat, and Hildegard miraculously found herself able to move once more. In 1150, Hildegard and her nuns were off to start their own brand-new community.

In their own space, Hildegard and the nuns gained even more followers. Volmar came to join them and got to work scribbling down Hildegard's insights, some of which included new ways of looking at classical Biblical themes particularly in relation to women. While she agreed that, like Eve, women were weaker and softer than men, she argued that this meant their minds were sharper. Women were defined less by what their bodies could do than by what their minds were free to achieve without the burden of heavy flesh. Women were created by God, she argued, not as a worse sort of man, but as something new and different.

Indeed, instead of accepting that men were at the top of a hierarchically ordered universe with women below them, Hildegard imagined creation as interconnected and harmonious. Men and women had to understand themselves as complementary, with qualities that should be used to support each other as equals before God. Sure, one sex might excel at some things that the other lacked, but that didn't make one sex worse than the other. Instead, Hildegard thought, men and women could learn from each other.

For Hildegard, when it came to procreation, women's experiences were as interesting and important as men's. In a work about fertility, she included the first description of a woman's orgasm

ever written in Europe. "When a woman is making love with a man, a sense of heat in her brain, which brings with it sensual delight, communicates the taste of that delight during the act and summons forth the emission of the man's seed. And when the seed has fallen into its place, that vehement heat descending from her brain draws the seed to itself and holds it, and soon the woman's sexual organs contract, and all the parts that are ready to open up during the time of menstruation now close, in the same way as a strong man can hold something enclosed in his fist." This was crucial knowledge because ancient and medieval Europeans alike believed that orgasm for both men and women was necessary for conception. It is an incredibly elegant way of explaining a complex sensation and makes perfect sense in the context of her writing on the human body.

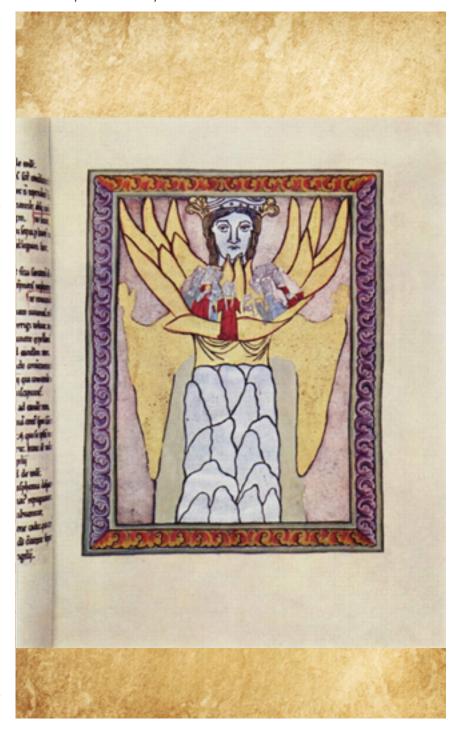
In fact, Hildegard's focus on health and nature was so groundbreaking that she is considered the founder of what we call "natural history," the precursor to science in the German lands. Her book Causae et Curae was the medieval equivalent of a bestseller, explaining what she saw as the connection between humans and nature and also giving top health and beauty tips to readers. Of course, the section on how astrology effects various medical conditions might seem strange to us now, but this was a valid intellectual theory that had held from the ancient Greeks, so we can't really blame her. Besides, a lot of Hildegard's herbal medical cures actually do work and have since been tried and tested, so it's clear that she was using some of the resultsoriented thinking that we now associate with scientific method. Overall, it is a masterwork and had a huge impact on thinkers across Europe.

On top of all of this writing, Hildegard and her nuns also put on plays, and Hildegard wrote them music to perform. Hildegard, like most medieval Europeans, saw music as a reflection of the divine, and considered that, before original sin, Adam's voice "had the sweetness of all musical harmony." She wanted to make up to God for all the sinning humans had done, so she wrote anthems with gorgeous poetry to praise him, as well as various saints, the Virgin Mary, or to celebrate religious feast days. She often wrote about the experience of womanhood in her music, as well as some just straight-up erotic songs addressed to Jesus as her husband and lover. Her biggest hits were her musical play Ordo Virtutum and Symphonia. The music still bangs and is played today around the world. (Yes, there are even Spotify playlists.)

It's hard not to be blown away by Hil-

degard and her achievements, but it's also a reminder of why we don't often get to hear about a lot of other incredible historical women. The world has always been full of intelligent, talented, amazing women, but not all of them were rich enough to be sent to live in a religious house and get a killer education, even if they were geniuses. They didn't all attract some guy to write their story down when they weren't taught to write themselves. They also definitely didn't have

Archbishops to argue with them if they wanted to live somewhere new. When we remember Hildegard, then, we should also take time to acknowledge the vast numbers of forgotten women who could also have achieved what she did given better support and fewer men literally trying to lock them inside for their own gain. Hildegard achieved a lot in spite of her circumstances, but she'd likely also want us to remember the other women that we can't hear about.



Photos courtesy of Obelisk Art History

ENTERTAINMENT

# REVIEW: LATE NIGHT WITH THE DEVIL

BY NATHANIEL BELL

he success of a horror film depends less on its story than on its execution. Even the descriptor "found footage" is sometimes misleading; you may think you know what you're getting into, but if the handling is novel enough, a movie can still surprise you. Late Night with the Devil is a casebook example of how clever execution can triumph over a routine concept and predictable development, taking a sow's ear and turning it into a sow's ear purse.

The content of this soon-to-be cult classic is framed as a "lost" tape containing the ill-fated Halloween broadcast of a syndicated late night talk show called Night Owls. The year is 1977, and the once popular series is plummeting in the Nielsen ratings while its garrulous host, Jack Delroy (David Dastmalchian), is still recovering from the loss of his wife to cancer. Hoping to stage a comeback, Jack lines up a series of controversial guests, among whom is a spiritualist (Fayssal Bazzi) who senses a malign presence in the studio. Those ill feelings are confirmed with the last guests of the evening, which include a parapsychologist (Laura Gordon) and a 12-year-old girl (Ingrid Torelli), the sole survivor of a cabal of Satanists. Slowly and inexorably, darker revelations

are brought to light.

The film is set, shrewdly, at the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, when an interest in drugs and alternative religions coincided with a resurgence of occult activity. The interview with the little girl resembles the celebrated—and later discredited—televised séance conducted by Bishop Pike with the medium Arthur Ford, and one of the show's guests is a hypnotist (Ian Bliss) reminiscent of paranormal investigator Hans Holzer. Dastmalchian, equipped with a beige suit and long sideburns, gives a game performance as the spiritually vulnerable host, and his joshing around with announcer and sidekick Gus (Rhys Auteri) has the ring of authenticity.

Found footage horror has lost its novelty in the years since the Blair Witch roamed the woods of New England. What lifts Late Night with the Devil above others in its class is its total commitment to achieving the look and feel of late 1970s TV. The Australian writing-directing team Colin and Cameron Cairnes admit to being inspired by The Don Lane Show ("Australia's answer to The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson), whose eponymous host betrayed

an interest in the supernatural. The film cuts adroitly between black-and-white photography for the scenes of backstage drama and richly textured color that simulates the videotape recording of the live broadcast. The intentionally flat lighting and gliding camera movements complete the illusion of an actual broadcast while the tongue-in-cheek script delivers some well-earned zingers. ("Ladies and gentlemen, please stay tuned for a live television first as we attempt to commune with the Devil. But not before a word from our sponsors.")

If Late Night with the Devil doesn't quite stick the landing, it's because all of its energy has been channeled into achieving the verisimilitude of its miseen-scene. The story, to put it bluntly, is pretty standard stuff—a Mephistophelian tale that resembles Rosemary's Baby by way of The King of Comedy—but the conviction with which it is told makes it a treat for horror aficionados. There is even an interesting, elusive conservatism to its moral message that if you mess with the Devil, the Devil is going to mess with you.



FOOD

## THE OTHER SIDE OF CATALINA

The Vineyards of El Rancho Escondido

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



hen Alison Wrigley Rusack was just 6 months old, her parents, Alison Hunter Wrigley and William Wrigley, already had her on a horse on their ranch in Catalina Island. That legacy, with many others of the famous chewing gum family, was handed down to the fifth generation, when Alison found herself on the back of an Arabian horse with one hand holding the reins and the other taking turns with the bottle-feeding of sons Austin, Hunter and Parker.

Beginning this month, the Catalina Island Company offers tours of the hidden family horse ranch, known as El Rancho Escondido, built in 1930 by Alison's grandparents. The journey starts in the City of Avalon into rugged terrain by way of Stagecoach Road on a fully restored 1950s Flxible Bus used for tours past on the island, and meanders through buffalo herds and other notable eco sights with detailed tour

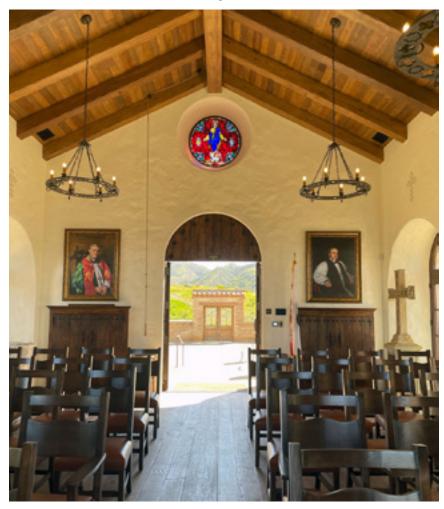
Located 14 winding miles into the island's interior just past the Airport in the Sky and three miles from Cata"My grandfather, Philip Wrigley was adamant about creating a using horse...a sound conformationally correct, athletic horse, with dense bone and excellent legs. The Catalina approach was from the doing horse to the pretty horse, not the reverse. That was the Wrigley philosophy all the way..."

MISDEE WRIGLEY MILLER

Family Plaque. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.



Alison Wrigley Rusack. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.



The Bishop's Chapel. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.



Austin Rusack. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.



Hunter Rusack. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.

lina's westside, the ranch is also used to sustainably grow Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes for Rusack Vineyards in Santa Ynez, from which the family sources their award-winning wines. Alison and her husband of 40 years, Geoff Rusack, also showcase a Zinfandel variety that comes from a handful of resilient vines thriving on Catalina's sibling island, Santa Cruz. The vines on Catalina were first planted in 2007 and harvested in 2009, and the fruit is flown to Santa Ynez for processing under winemaker Steve Gerbac's watchful eye and distinguished palate.

The quail like the grapes, the native Catalina foxes like the grapes and the wasps like the grapes. To maintain the

high quality of the fruit, the grapes are picked at night so they can arrive at the winery as early and as cool as possible. Austin is the brand manager at Rusack Vineyards.

The 16-stall horseshoe-shaped stables and courtyard of the original structure have been restored to their 1930 splendor, still maintaining the bricks and roof tiles made from Catalina's famous clay, whose tiles dot structures throughout the city of Avalon. A large trophy room and museum have been added, touting the family's extensive equestrian history and accomplishments. Live horse demonstrations are part of the tour underneath towering Eucalyptus trees.

In 2021, the Bishop's Chapel was dedicated on the property's hilltop as an homage to Geoff's father, Robert Claflin Rusack, the fourth episcopal bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles in 1960 at St. Paul's Cathedral in downtown Los Angeles. The church was built in 1923, on Figueroa Street north of Wilshire Boulevard, and demolished in 1980 after earthquake damage. Tour guides detail the history of JORY's Bell, the Baptismal Font and the original stained-glass windows featured in the small, serene chapel.

"It was my husband's dream as a memorial to his parents to build a chapel here," Alison tells L.A. Weekly during a recent wine-tasting in the chapel's vesti-bule overlooking Shark Harbor and the remote Little Harbor campground."We were inspired by the chapel on Santa Cruz island. We often to go over there for a service in the middle of nowhere. Joe Walsh of the Eagles fought hard to keep it there and is the chairman of the board of the Santa Cruz Island Foundation. He still does the music. I remember the first time, sitting in that chapel in the middle of the Channel Islands, and Joe Walsh was doing the music. A Catholic cardinal performed the service. It truly was spiritual."

Also new to Catalina is the Flx Biergarten, the island's first and only biergarten located in Avalon, run by son Hunter. Flx takes its name from the historic '50s Flxible buses that carried tourists on the streets of Avalon and along the island's interior. The openair atmosphere across from the pier is decorated with string lights, restored tour buses and cozy fire pits around the centralized beer pong table. Hunter, like Austin, has been a constant in the Catalina legacy, including hands-on time spent working on the island's dramatic zip line.

In 1975 William's parents Philip Knight Wrigley, his wife Helen, and Philip's sister, Dorothy Wrigley Offield, deeded 42,000 acres of Catalina Island to the Catalina Island Conservancy, a non-profit organization they had established three years earlier in 1972. About 20% of the island currently belongs to the Catalina Island Company, owned by Wrigley descendants, which provides a variety of tours, accommodation packages and excursions.

"It's been a part of my life since day one," says Alison, who still rides. "My great-grandfather, grandfather and father raised me to care about our legacy. It's in my blood. It didn't take much convincing living in Chicago in an apartment in the city to come out here. We'd go up to a house on the lake on the weekends, but coming here — especially for someone who loved horses like I did - was an amazing experience. I fell in love with it and brought my kids to the island when they were little. Everything here has a story and a reason behind it. Catalina is a treasure that we want to protect and preserve and have taught the future generations to do the same."





El Rancho Escondido. Photo courtesy of Catalina Island Co.



Flx Biergarten in Avalon. Photo courtesy of Michele Stueven.



El Rancho Escondido. Photo courtesy of Catalina Island Co.

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## ALCHEMIZE YOUR WARDROBE FOR THE SUMMER USING ROSALES' TIPS 1. Curate Both Your Closet and Your Energy

BY STEPHANIE MONTES / BUST

LOS ANGELES' STYLIST WITCH SHARES HER

ower dressing gets a whole new meaning when you infuse intention into your outfits. Just look at Gabriela Rosales, aka @thestylistwitch. Since 2019, the Los Angeles-based stylist and glamour witch has helped clients get dressed on a magickal level, using a unique approach that incorporates astrology, tarot, and color magic. These tools give her insight into someone's "exalted aesthetic," a term she coined to define the embodiment of self-actualization.

Rosales also turns to glamour magic, which she describes as the ability to amplify aspects of yourself through the practice of embodiment. "It's about viewing your closet as a potent tool, imbuing your garments and accessories with intention, and raising the energy of that intention by embodying it and living in alignment with it while wearing the garment," she says, comparing the process to charging a crystal. Essentially, it's dressing for the life you want with a witchy twist.

"I'm a physical memento type of person, and at this point, my collection really tells the story of my life, and it brings me a lot of joy to access the spectrum of my evolution so tangibly," says Rosales. Just as you purge bad vibes and energies to make room for long-term positivity, the same should be done with personal pieces. When you feel good about what you're wearing, you carry a confidence that aligns you with your higher self.

#### 2. Express Yourself in Every Way

Rosales' 102-year-old style icon, Iris Apfel, was "living proof that you can look fabulous at any age" and that we as women never have to "tone it down" for acceptability's sake. Limiting your style choices is a form of internalizing, so if you consider yourself a maximalist, it's best to put all your best pieces on display at all times, just like you would with your feelings.

#### 3. Remember the Basic Law of Manifestation

"I think one of the most powerful ways to integrate magic into your personal style is simply by following your heart," explains Rosales. "Personal style is emotional, not logical, so the minute we start to overthink, we already place too much emphasis on external opinions and validation." The best thing you can do is protect your fashion choices like you would your hopes and dreams. "After all," says Rosales, "one of the most important rules to manifestation is being sovereign in your truth in order to attract aligned attention, connection, and opportunities.



## MWEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

### EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

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## MWEEKLY Bulletin

Thank you Saint Jude, Saint of the Impossible, EC



