

DRUIDIC RITUAL

THE *AR nDRAIOCHT FEIN* OUTLINE OF WORSHIP A BRIEFING FOR NEWCOMERS

Bright blessings, and welcome! This pamphlet is an introduction to the structure and meaning of our Pagan worship. We hope that you find our work as uplifting and fulfilling as we do.

The INTENTION of OUR RITE

Any Druidic ritual has as a primary intention the re-weaving of the links between human-kind, the natural world, and the God/desses and Spirits who support both. For thousands of years human culture lived in more or less intimate communion with the unseen worlds. Over the centuries of European culture these ties have been weakened, until our modern materialism is endangering the very air and water that sustains our life. We work to reconnect with the powers of Land, Sea and Sky, honoring the spirit that is in them as well as their physical realities.

As with any religious path we also seek blessings for ourselves, our families and communities. We open our hearts to the flow of divine blessing that comes from our God/desses. We seek also to awaken that same divine spark in our own souls, so that we can bless the world in return.

Ar nDraiocht Fein is a small part of the neoPagan movement, one of the fastest-growing currents in modern religion. From our beginnings we have been committed to serving the whole Pagan community. Druidic worship is open and inclusive. We welcome Pagans of every tradition and path, as well as those who want to learn more about Druidry or pagan ways in general. We ask only that you respect our ways; you can expect the same from us.

PRINCIPLES of DRUIDIC WORSHIP

The outer form of our worship, like all ceremony, is made up of spoken prayers, invocations and statements combined with traditional actions. While we have reclaimed some of these from pre-Christian Europe we do not grant them the status of revelation or scripture. All ritual speech is made by humans to help turn our minds more effectively toward the Divine. Druidry teaches that beautiful speech, poetry or music pleases and influences the Powers, and so we fill our rites with these things to the best of our ability.

A central action of our rites is the giving of gifts to the Powers. This is commonly called sacrifice (Latin: to make sacred). We teach that the God/desses and Spirits are strengthened by our offerings, and show their gratitude by blessing the givers. In pagan ways humans are not mere dependents of even the greatest Deities. Rather they depend on our love and offerings as we depend on their blessing and aid.

While it is true that the ancients offered animal and even occasional human lives to the Powers, our modern Paganism rejects any offering that

takes life or causes injury. We offer our God/desses flowers, food, drink, incense and scented oil, precious metals and gems, poetry and song, but *never* blood.

The soul-skills that bind Pagan worship together are the techniques of meditation and trance. By concentrating our minds on the symbols and words of the rite, by relaxing our bodies and letting go of our internal dialogue and by strongly visualising the rite's energy flows and Deities we induce a state of mind that allows contact with Inner worlds.

In every Druidic rite there will be a series of spoken instructions intended to help induce this trance. Following these suggestions with an open mind will deepen your experience. Remember that all such guidance is just that; you are in control of your state of mind at all times. Yet it is through consenting to trance that you can know our Magic best.

These three principles - ritual, sacrifice and trance combine to produce the magic of Druidic worship.

The outline of DRUIDIC RITES

PART I: ESTABLISHING THE GROVE

In ancient days Pagans gathered in places hallowed by tradition. Sometimes these were temple buildings. More often they were groves and glens in the deep forest, or high places. In our times we must usually recreate the holy atmosphere of the Sacred Groves by ritual and meditation.

The Procession: In some cases the presiding priest/ess will come out of the Grove and lead a procession of all the worshippers into the holy place. Usually this is accompanied by song. At other times the worshippers are sent to meditate alone then called to the Grove by horn, drum or song. When approaching the Grove one tradition is to circle the Center of the Grove three times in the sunwise direction.

Honoring the Mother: The priest/ess usually gives a simple statement of beginning, followed by a prayer and offering to the Earth Mother who upholds our lives and rites. One common custom is to bend and kiss, or place a hand on, the earth to honor Her.

Opening Meditation: The priest/ess or a Grove member will lead a basic grounding and centering. This attunement helps us to connect our individual souls with the Two Powers. The Earth Current or Underworld Power carries the dark, mixed elements from which all forms arise. The Sky Current, or Starry Power is the ordering pattern that crystallizes forms out of the Underworld potential. Together these powers manifest the Middle World in which we live.

Following the Grove meditation the Priest/ess gives a statement of the intention and purpose of the rite and its precedent in the Ways of the ancients.

Affirming the World Order: Druidic ritual is anchored in the Sacred Center

of the Grove. The Center is conceived as a meeting-place of the common world with the Otherworlds of the Spirits. We use one or more of the universal symbols of the Center - the Fire, the Well and the World-Tree. Fire connects us with the Sky, the Well with the Underworld and the Tree is the Boundary Between All Worlds, rooted deep and crowned high.

In this phase of the ritual the Order of the Worlds is acknowledged - first the vertical axis of Under- Mid- and Starry Worlds. The rite may then honor the three worlds of Land, Sea and Sky, or the Four Directions.

By affirming these symbols in our rite we acknowledge them in ourselves, making our own souls a temple in which the God/desses may dwell.

Opening the Gates: Meditation on the World Order is a valuable spiritual tool all by itself. The next part of the rite transforms the simple symbols of the Center into true Magical gates. First the priest/ess invokes the Deity that has charge of the Ways Between, in the pantheon of the rite. We offer to the Gatekeeper and ask their help in the work.

The symbols of the Sacred Center are then conjured to function as the Gates Between. Through these gates we send our love, worship and offerings to the powers and they, in turn, send blessing to us. As long as the Gates are open our thoughts and impulses can be heard clearly by the God/desses and Spirits.

PART 2: OFFERINGS TO THE POWERS

Preliminary Offerings: There are two preliminary offerings usually made at this point.

First the Bard of the rite invokes the power of poetic inspiration to indwell both the priest/esses and worshippers. This may be either an offering to a specific Deity or a general attunement to sources of inspiration in the Self.

Next we offer to the spirits commonly called the Outdwellers. These are the Powers that can be inimical to mortals or oppose our own God/desses. We acknowledge their presence, asking them to leave our rites in peace. We also acknowledge the parts of ourselves that might, likewise, interfere with proper worship.

Three Kindred Offerings: In each of our rites we invoke and offer to the Spirits in three categories. We call these the Kindreds to reflect their family relationship with one another and with us. **The Nature Spirits** are those who ensoul soil and stone, water and wind, bird and beast. **The Dead** are our ancestors, both those of actual blood or those of our heart and affection. **The God/desses** are the eldest Children of the Mother, the Brightest, Wisest and Strongest. For each of these we speak an invocation and make a proper offering.

When these Triad Offerings are made the worshippers should meditate on and call to those Spirits that are closest to her. Her own Ancestors, her God/desses, her allies among the Nature Spirits are called to join us in honoring the Patron Powers of the rite.

Patron Offerings: Each of our rites is commonly dedicated to two or more of the God/desses. These are usually chosen either for their connection with

can make personal offerings. Usually these are 'Praise Offerings' - offerings of art- songs, poetry etc., though they may be thanks to the Powers for blessings received.

Final Sacrifice and Omen: After the Praise Offerings the priest/ess gives a final Prayer of Sacrifice and makes a large offering to the Fire. This is the moment whenever a worshipper sends her love and respect, her energy, through the Gates to the Patrons and Powers. After the Sacrifice the priest/ess seeks an omen, doing a simple divination to determine what sort of blessing the Powers offer in return for our gifts.

PART 3: THE BLESSING

Opening to Blessing: The priest/ess leads a meditation combining the presence of the powers with the content of the Omen. We also meditate on our own needs, those of our loved ones, and our community.

At this time there is usually a litany in which the assembled company pray to be given the Blessing, in the form of the Waters of Life. In this moment your personal desires should be strongly imagined, held in the mind and heart, with harm to none and for the good of all.

The Waters of Life: The Blessing of the Powers is commonly given as a cup or horn of drink. There is always clear water or fruit juice and sometimes ale, wine or even whiskey (Gaelic: *uisge na beatha*, water of life). The priest/ess invokes the Blessing as water drawn from the Well of Potentials and held in the light of the Fire of Transformation. We contemplate again our needs, and the Omen as we drink the Blessing. We often sing an anthem or listen quietly during this most reverent moment.

Works: If there is any social or magical task to be accomplished it is done at this time. Healings, announcements of weddings, child blessings, workings for community good may occasionally be part of the rites.

PART 4: THANKS, AND CLOSING:

After all is done we give proper thanks to all the Powers. The priest/ess leads us in thanking the Patrons and the Kindreds. We thank the Gatekeeper and conjure the Gates to close. We renew our grounding, our connection with Earth and Sky, and center the energies of the rite in our souls. We allow any excess energy to flow away into the ground as we offer any remains of the rite to the Earth Mother.

The rite concludes with a blessing and we often sing a closing chant as we leave the Grove.

SOME CONVENTIONS OF DRUIDIC RITUAL

Our rites are open and inclusive. We do not close our circles, and you are free to come and go as you please during the rite. We ask only that you be respectfully quiet and attentive when within earshot of the ritual.

If you have a Praise Offering that you wish to perform, please see our Grove Bard before the rite. We ask that you not applaud the Praise Offerings, rather give the energy of your appreciation to the Patrons.