

REVIEWS

“Gail Wood takes you on an amazing journey with the God of Wicca over the course of the year. Her inclusive, personal and experiential approach encourages the reader to make direct contact with the many faces of the Wild God as embodied by the Sun passing through the Zodiac signs. The diversity of her approach has something to teach everybody learning to connect and often, re-connect with the masculine divinity. I know I learned quite a lot..” — **Christopher Penczak**, Author of *Sons of The Goddess* and *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*.

“Pagan women, this book will help you understand your men! Pagan men, this book will help you understand yourself!” — **M.R. Sellars**, Author of *The Rowan Gant Investigations*

“Move over *Men Are From Mars!* Women who read *The Wild God* will understand men, and Gods, in an entirely new way. Gail Wood is a savvy, spiritual, insightful and she cuts straight to the core of maleness in a way that will enlighten every reader, no matter their gender! Do not miss this book!” — **Maggie Shayne**, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

“At last! A book about the many forms of God that isn’t just about an old man in long, white robes!” — **Lauren Hartford**, *Celebrating the Tower Card*, Book #1 of *The Priestess Diaries*.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Capitalization is the bane of every pagan author and every pagan editor. If you're new to pagan literature, you may notice that some words are capitalized that you don't often see capitalized, and even then, these words are not always capitalized. Our use of capitals is intentional, out of reverence.

Many of us in the service of publishing pagan-oriented fiction and non-fiction grew up in Christianity where we were taught to show respect to Deity—God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—by capitalizing holy names, titles, and pronouns referring to holy names. As pagans, we tend to find sacred meaning in Nature, so not only are God and Goddess names proper nouns but also terms such as *Male*, *Female*, *Light*, *Dark*, *Life*, *Death*, *Earth*, and *Nature*.

Sometimes these words may be used in different contexts so that, for example, when *earth* refers to dirt or an element, we used the lower case but when *Earth* represents an entity or a form of God, we used the upper case. Although the differences can be very, very subtle, we've made every attempt to be consistent within the meaning of each term as we understand it, but at some point—and since many of us see God in everything—we could conceivably capitalize every word.

Lorna Tedder
Spilled Candy Books

THE WILD GOD

**RITUALS AND MEDITATIONS
FOR THE SACRED MASCULINE**

by

Gail Wood

Spilled Candy Books
Niceville, Florida USA

The Wild God
Copyright 2006

By Gail Wood

Published by: Spilled Candy Books,
Spilled Candy Publications
Post Office Box 5202
Niceville, FL 32578-5202
<http://www.spilledcandy.com>

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Spilled Candy Books is committed to its authors and their work. For this reason, we do not permit our covers to be “stripped” for returns, but instead, we require that the whole book be returned in resale condition. Resale condition is defined as no markings, stamps, scuffs, bent covers, or any condition in which you yourself would not wish to buy the book.

ISBN: 1-892718-56-1 (trade paperback)
First printing June 2006
Printed in the United States of America

Photo Credit: Jodie Coston

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
Dedication	8
Introduction	9
Seeking the God	11
The God and the Sun	17
The Role of the Priest in Pagan Spirituality	22
Meditation and Ritual	26
You are the Sun:	
Ritual Introduction to the God	37
Building the Foundation:	
The God in Capricorn	45
Wild and Changing:	
The God in Aquarius	54
Stirring the Pot:	
The God in Pisces	63
Mastering the Self:	
The God in Aries	75
Growing the Garden:	
The God in Taurus	84
Teaching and Learning:	
The God in Gemini	95
Fathering:	
The God in Cancer	105
Daring to Dream:	
The God in Leo	115

Dancing Life and Death:	
The God in Virgo	125
Balancing Life:	
The God in Libra	134
Transforming Life:	
The God in Scorpio	143
Lightening Up:	
The God in Sagittarius.	154
Conclusion:	
The Ecstasy of the God	164
 Glossary	 166
Bibliography	172
Index	175

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a part of me that would like to proudly declare, with my hands on my hips, “I did this!” But no writer works alone, and we draw inspiration from many sources and rely on the help and support of others. So there are many thanks to give, joyfully and with appreciation. Deep gratitude goes to Kathy Schaufler for proofing the second draft. Thanks to my former circle, The Web, in Central New York for germinating the seed that eventually flowered as *The Wild God*. Deep thanks to the RavenMyst Circle and the Coven of the Heron and the Coven of the Hawk for nurturing me spiritually and encouraging me in all creative and magical things. We are renewed!

And thanks to Mouse who helped me tend the growth of this work, and for showing the God in you to me. And to the many men who inspired me to know that the masculine is indeed sacred. To Alex who inspired “The Call of the Wild God,” one afternoon in an Ithaca Reclaiming workshop. To the incarcerated pagan men who participated in “The God of the Month Club,” for your continuing support and energy. To Maggie for leading me to so many magical things, including Spilled Candy.

And deep gratitude and appreciation for Spilled Candy and Lorna Tedder. In these days of big publishing, Spilled Candy is a gem of a press, focused on the reader and friendly to the writer, preserving and publishing the books that witches need! And to the editor of this book, Vicki Hinze, a fabulous writer in her own right. You gave my voice clarity. Thanks for putting up with the eccentric and inconsistent caPitaliZation!

And to all the wonderful writers of Witches In Print—thank you all so very much.

Blessed Be.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the men in my life who show me that the Male Energy is kind, compassionate, funny, strong and powerful.

To Mouse, my brothers by blood and by choice, my uncle, and the dads who have passed on to the Summerlands.

And most especially to the pagans behind bars: Gentlemen, thank you. I am honored to be your priestess and friend. May you walk your path, honoring your Gods, in a difficult and dark world.

Blessings, Bright and Dark.

INTRODUCTION

The Wild God comes from twenty years of practice in the Earth-based religion of Wicca. Wicca, as I practice it, is a balance between dual energies, Male-Female and Dark-Light. Through balance, I seek the transforming power of the Divine where there are no dualities and we are part of the One, unified and joyful. This work explores the energy of the God and is aimed at providing pagans experiences with the Male Divine as Lover, Son, Consort, Father, and in other roles. Frequently, in conversations and in writings, modern pagans have said that there is not much information on the God or that in ritual the God is only given a brief acknowledgement. It is most often true that the focus has been primarily on the Goddess—and no one is complaining about that!

So, why do we not have a similar experience of the God? From my own experiences, I know what a joy it is to find the energy of the Goddess and to feel Her love and nurturing, to experience Her power and strength. The Goddess encourages us to spiral inward and find ourselves and to find our Divine selves. She loves us without end and we see Her in the moon. The experience is similar when we discover the pagan God.

It is a joy to learn about the God in a new context and to find out how He moves in our lives. He dances into our lives and brings ecstasy and joy. He loves us and helps us to grow.

Another question that pagans ask is how do I know that this is real? How do I know that this is an authentic spiritual path? My answer to that has come from my experiences as a celebrant in pagan rituals of all sorts. I feel the energy. I feel it in my body, with my mind and in my spirit. I know for certain that when I stand in the east and invite the spirits to the circle that they are there. I sense and feel that energy move into the circle at my invitation. I know the Goddess is there and I know the God is there. The experiences of the energy are different, and I sense them. I cannot always explain in words what those differences are, and that is why this is a Mystery religion. The best I can do as a priestess and as a teacher is to provide the student and the questioner with the experiences to help them to know. We are all part of this Mystery and this Mystery is part of us.

This book provides the seeker with meditations based in ritual aimed at experiencing the God and the energy of the God. When we experience these meditations, we feel them with our minds, our bodies and our souls. Our understanding grows on many levels as the God moves into our lives and into our understanding of Spirit.

SEEKING THE GOD

Many of us in Wicca and other pagan traditions come to our spirituality from a mainstream religion dominated by a strong, rule-based God. Many of us come to the Goddess wary, damaged by our experiences in those religions. The Goddess heals us and helps us to become full spiritual beings, acknowledging and celebrating our fullness as humans and as sacred beings. It is normal and human to swing on the pendulum away from the God of Patriarchy into the embrace of the Goddess. After a time of joy and exploration, it is normal and human to get back on that pendulum and swing back to see the God from a new perspective. The God encourages us to spiral outward toward the sun. We look at our outer world and at the world's impact on our inner selves.

In *The Wild God*, we move through the Zodiac and the seasons to explore the life of the God. In that life, we will have experiences through ritual meditations that will help us know Him and His various roles. The God is a dynamic energy, no less important than the Goddess. He is here, loving us and celebrating us. His nature is part of our Nature. Knowing that will enhance our spirituality a hundredfold or more.

I have learned a lot about Sacred Male energy from the men in my life, most particularly from my lover, who goes by the magical name of Water Mouse. In knowing him, I have learned about the role of father, brother, lover, friend, grandfather, partner and companion. He has been in these roles in his life, before and after he met me. He, my brothers, other male relatives and friends have taught me a great deal about being a man. One of the things I learned is that the world is a sensual, sexual place full of color, light and sensation. Together, Mouse and I have been exploring the energy of the God and the Goddess. That exploration has given me new insights about the God, about being a priest on the Wiccan path.

I have also learned a lot about Sacred Male energy from the two male dogs in my life. Bob is a Golden Retriever mix with a sunny, straightforward, loving personality, Buddy is Mouse's full-blooded Labrador Retriever; bred to be a field hunter. Bob is neutered, Buddy is not. To Bob, life is a continuous experience of sensual gratification. He seeks food, attention and love. To Buddy, life is one continuous hunt and play. He, like Bob, seeks love. Bob is older and fatter. Buddy is a young, strong powerhouse of energy. Watching them interact and play is fun and interesting. Both male dogs are directed, playful and ecstatic, living each moment as it comes, embracing that moment with full attention and joy. They both need to know where they are in relationship to the two humans around them and in relationship to Congo, our female Labrador Retriever mix who is most definitely top dog.

One year, we had a Yule ritual at my house. The dogs are very attracted to ritual energy, especially Bob who grooves with it. As the priestess was guiding us

through a meditation of the birth of the God, Bob entered the circle. As the meditation got to the birth of the God into the world, Bob plopped down with a loud sigh that said, “I am here.” My embarrassment was dispelled when everyone laughed and the priestess said that she did not really expect to witness a real birth—or that the baby would be so hairy. One of the celebrants still calls Bob “the God.” Animals, particularly our pets tell us a lot about the Divine because they are creatures of Nature and therefore creatures of the Divine.

I like to say that Bob does not have much, but he uses what he has. And what he has is bulk. When Buddy gets too close to Bob’s human, Bob bumps Buddy out of the way. When Buddy gets too close to food, then Bob bumps Buddy out of the way. When Buddy gets too close to Congo, Bob bumps Buddy out of the way. When they first met, because Buddy was so strong and aggressive, I thought he would be first in the dog-power hierarchy. This has not been the case. Bob has bumped Buddy into his place as the youngest dog.

Another time, friends were visiting with their pretty female Collie mix, Luna. At one point, Luna was outside the fence with the humans and Bob, Congo and Buddy were inside the house. Mouse let them out into the fenced yard and all three dogs ran over to Luna. Lots of sniffing and tail wagging went on. It was also dinnertime. Bob kept running to the door to see if there was food and then running back to the fence. To the door and to the fence, over and over again. When I told Mouse the story, I said I could almost hear Bob debating: “Food or Luna? Food or Luna? Food or Luna.” Food won, by the way. Buddy was a little more directed; Luna captured his entire attention. One day I was talking with Mouse, and I gave him what I thought

was an intelligent analysis of the motivations of some men we know. Mouse looked at me and said, “Guys are not that complicated. We are more basic, and it usually boils down to Food or –Luna? Food or Luna?”

This book is an exploration of the God-and the energies of the Sacred Masculine—in all His simplicity and complexity. The life of the God is the story of the seasons. As He is born and grows, the year moves from winter to spring. As He becomes a young man and explores his manhood, the year unfolds into glorious summer. As He matures and grows up, the year moves into the harvest and the fall. As the God ages and dies, the year flows softly into winter. The twelve signs of our Zodiac trace the movement of the sun through the Heavens. We will explore the roles and qualities of the God as He moves through these signs.

As you read this book, you will find meditation-based rituals to help you experience the qualities of the God in your own being. By doing the meditations and rituals, you can take an active part in learning about the Sacred Masculine. Do these rituals on a Sunday, during the day, sometime during the sign. Of course you can do them at other times, but to feel the maximum energy, work with energies you are exploring. Keep a sun journal. Observe the sun during the day and during the year. In the journal, observe your feelings and your sensations. Use all the senses of your body and your psychic nature. Be in the moment and embrace it with joy.

In this book, we will follow the life of the God throughout the year, tuning our wisdom to the signs of the Zodiac.

Capricorn begins with the birth of the God. We see the beginnings of a life being formed and structured.

We look at beginnings and endings because a birth signifies a continuation of a soul from another lifetime. We see the God as a builder and creator.

Aquarius moves us into the life of the small boy and the beginning of communication. He has a consciousness of right and wrong. The boy becomes an agent of change. We see the God as a wild creature and as a transforming power.

Pisces shows us the dreamer. The boy daydreams. We see the God as a poet, a bard and artist.

Aries moves and shakes up the world as the little boy becomes a pre-teen. He runs, dances, and plays. He innovates. We see the God as a warrior of the Spirit.

Taurus grows up and becomes a young man full of responsibility and self-awareness. We see the God as lover and farmer.

Gemini shows us the man, educated and ready to fulfill his life purpose. We see the God as the teacher.

Cancer shows us the man with the responsibility of home and family. We see the God as a father.

Leo shows us the man seeking recognition and fame. We see the God as performer.

Virgo shows us the man as well established in his life, both emotionally and professionally. We see the God as guide, manager and organizer.

Libra shows us the man growing in maturity. He sees Life from a middle perspective. We see the God as a judge.

Scorpio shows us the man in the winter of his life, wise and vibrant. We see the God as healer and transformer.

Sagittarius shows us a man who has left behind the daily tasks of Life and is eager to embrace the magic. We see the God as explorer and magician.

Through the stories of different Gods, we will learn about Him and His roles in our spiritual paths. Through the experiences of ritual and meditation, we will learn how the God speaks to our hearts and our souls. We will also tell God stories and dance in the light. Even though the sun casts shadows, we delight (pun intended) in the warmth and glow of its energies.

THE GOD AND THE SUN

The God has many faces, many names that try to explain His power and mystery. Cernnunos, Apollo, Jesus, Zeus, Annwn, Lugh, Jehovah, Lord of the Wild Hunt, the Green Man. How can we know Him?

We know Him in our being, and by exploring the Sun and the magic of the outward spiral. We spiral deosil—with the sun—to explore what it means to be God. We explore the

in order to know the mysteries of the Universe. We find the Sacred both inside us and in the world around us. We feel the energy of the God and of the Sun and feel it dance inside us in harmony with the other energies. Who is He? Who is He in relationship to each of us? The challenge is to recognize the God in us, in others and in our world.

In my experience, western spirituality is dominated by the patriarchal aspect of a single God who serves as a rule-giver and a judge. We are surrounded by the language and images of one God, but there are other Gods and other aspects of the Divine Male. Many of us who have been through a mainstream religion think we know

everything there is to know about God, but we only know the patriarchal aspect of God and about the consequences of the God-force misapplied. Even if we have not been raised in a God-centered religion, the images, attitudes and rules are inescapable. They pervade our intellectual and emotional landscape. The assumption of one God dominates our popular culture, and those assumptions underpin everything in our culture from literature to television. We are taught that God is love, but all we see are the rules and the scandals. It is a tainted love, marred by institutionalized bullying and religious regimentation. It was not the God that tainted the love but the institutions that misused the love, power and authority of the Divine Male.

When I was a Christian, I came to perceive God as a kind of Baptist bully who beat me up on the playground and took my money. When I became a pagan, I found that the God is more than a bully or the wise old man with a long beard depicted in pictures. He is wild, irrepressible, humorous, sexual, bold, loving, strong, vigorous, tender—unendingly mysterious. He is the Consort to the Goddess, a partner in the mysteries of the spirit, part of the unity of the Universe. For a time, I assumed that for Him to serve as Consort was to serve as a secondary or as an assistant. I have found this to be untrue. To be Consort is to be dynamic, supportive and energetic. The Consort has a role as a full partner to the Goddess. He supports Her, helping Her as they dance the dance of creation. He leads and He follows. He celebrates Her rituals and He celebrates himself and His rituals. It is an amazing dance of giving and receiving.

While we most often associate the God with the Sun and with light, He has a darker aspect. He is a God of

the Dark, of endings and beginnings. In the dark, the God understands the wisdom of death and rebirth. He understands that healing is not always curing, that grief dances through our lives. He understands that the light can expose as well as heal. He understands grief, sorrow and sacrifice as He dances with the Goddess in the dance of Life and Death, Dark and Light.

For the most part, Wiccans and pagans associate God energy with the sun. As we go through our daily lives, we move in sunlight, experiencing the sun. Walking during the day and in the sun is very different from walking at night under the various phases of the moon. While the moon casts mysterious shadows, providing us with a mysterious landscape, the sun shows us everything. The sun casts out the shadows that define the light. The moon illuminates, the sun reveals. The moon shows us soft edges and mystery, the sun shows us sharp definitions and reality—or so it would seem. There is more mystery and depth to the sun than we think we see on the surface. We need to walk boldly in the sun to discover the energies and mysteries of the day, the sun, and the God.

The sun and its cycle define the seasons. The sun shines brightly in the spring, nurturing the plants and young animals. The sun sharpens, becomes heated in the summer, heating our blood, making us first energetic and lively and then languid, longing for relief. The sun moves away from us in autumn, bringing chilly air and thoughts of rest. The sun shines dimly in the winter, straining to be seen through the clouds. And finally, the darkness takes up most of the day. We long to lay down for the final rest and reflection. As the sun makes its way through the year, the God grows and changes. The

story of the seasons is the story of the God.

Each day also tells us the story of the God. Each day, we see the sun live its life as it rises in the East in soft pastels and clouds, high into the sky at the height of its vigor. Then the sun slowly sinks into the West, showing us the stark world of sleep, hibernation and death. The sun may make us think that everything is obvious. It is not. There are mysteries for us to discover—if we have the courage to seek them.

Perhaps some of our hesitancy to celebrate the God and His nature is not only because He has been co-opted by patriarchy, but because we have lost our connection with Nature. Not the pretty, well-groomed Nature of parks with rangers but the wild, untamed Nature that can kill as easily as it feeds and protects us. Twenty-first century life is often disconnected from Nature. As we hustle and bustle, we do not live close to the feeling that the world is in a constant state of creation, destruction and re-creation.

Creation includes sex, birth and growth, which flow naturally into infirmity, death and decay. Creation energy is powerful and overwhelming energy, basic to all of Nature, including human nature. It is not the energy of civilization but a vibrant, sexual, sensual living connection to this planet's heartbeat in all its creation and destruction. It is uncontrollable and wild. We can still be masculine, but we may have lost our connection to the Masculine because we are not *in* Nature in this atavistic sense. We are not wild every day. Wildness is ecstasy, the abandonment of restrictive bonds; to live, to dance, in every moment. The power of the Masculine is the power of the wild, the ability to transcend the *shoulds* and *coulds* of our upbringing. It is the power to embrace the divinity of our own nature and our own planet.

Wildness is not road rage or any other kind of rage. Wildness is that expansive sense of freedom we experience when we understand our own masculine power and we acknowledge it as part of our lives. It is not the patriarchal power.

Masculine power is mastery. Mastery forgoes the controls of civilization and lets us live fully and confidently in the moment, understanding our basic nature and our part in the creative process. Mastery is understanding our own being and using that understanding to assert our various roles. It is letting our emotions flow through us. It is living in the world as natural beings of sensuality, sexuality and beauty. It is our right! It is the melding of body, mind and soul that sustains us and lets us stand in our own power. In this way we are masterful, we are wild.

THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST IN PAGAN SPIRITUALITY

The priest is the embodiment of the God in pagan ritual. In some traditions the priest evokes the Goddess, and in other traditions He invokes the God. Like so much of the pagan spirituality, what and how we do things is open to our creativity and perception of what is right. What is right is usually guided by the community's perception as well as the individual's perception.

In many pagan groups, covens and communities, the priestess takes the leadership role. That is a delight to someone like me, who spent time in mainstream religions looking for a "God who looked like me." Frequently, the priest is in the background, is absent, or his role is not apparent. One year during the Summer Solstice, the priest was called away from my circle's ritual and was unable to work in circle. The priestess asked me to take the role of priest even though there were men present at the ritual. She explained that she had worked with me in circle and was comfortable with me

as a partner in the ritual. Moreover, I was familiar with the ritual and with its details.

So I served as priest, calling in the God and performing the other duties of the priest. I monitored the circle, ensuring that the energy remained within the circle. In our circle, the priest serves as *the man in black*: someone who stands on the edge of the circle with one foot inside it and one foot in the physical world. This maintains the integrity of the circle and keeps the power within the cast sphere. The man in black also monitors the comings and goings of those who need to leave or enter the circle. He cuts the door, making sure that the energy does not leak out. Many ritual participants are unaware of these actions because protection and monitoring happens in the background. This also allows the priestess to lead the ritual without worrying about guarding the gate.

During that ritual, I performed other duties, such as ensuring that the energy of the circle continued to move sunwise. I performed some of the details associated with our Summer Solstice ritual, like making sure that the props needed for the various functions were in the circle. And I performed the ritual's small chores without the priestess having to direct the action. These included passing the lots to be drawn and passing the cakes and ale.

The actions of the priest during that ritual were subtle and supportive. I was amazed at the amount of care that I took, and how much care I wanted to expend to support the priestess and my spiritual community. This ritual gave me a deep understanding of what it meant to be Consort. It took a lot of energy and thought to act in that capacity. It also took a great deal of humility and a healthy sense of self-worth. Since I am a priestess in my

own right, acting in this capacity might seem to be taking a step backward. It was more a step sideways, to stand at the priestess' side. I was the electricity that illuminated the light bulb.

The energy of the priest is invisible, steady, powerful and active, yet it does not always get the most attention. Once, when I spoke to a pagan student group, Mouse went with me. It was one of the first times we appeared publicly as priest and priestess. I sat at the front of the group and he sat slightly behind me. I knew he was there, and I was less nervous because of his loving support. He "had my back" in a way that was protecting me and keeping me safe during my talk and the ensuing discussion with the students. I was energized by his presence, acting with confidence and not worrying. He talked and answered questions but mostly did not assert himself.

After the talk, we both stayed for a long time. Some of the more shy people, mostly men, sought out Mouse to ask him questions. He was patient, kind and very male. He later told me he hoped that some of those guys got laid soon because they really needed it. A very male, very pagan, very priestly assessment!

Since that Solstice years ago, and in the three years it has taken me to write this book, I have been constantly put into situations and rituals where I have taken the priest role or have called in the God or read "The Charge of the God." His energy is different from the Goddess's and the priestess's. The Goddess comes to me in fullness and in darkness. She fills me with compassion, mystery and wonder. The priestess fulfills the aspects of the Goddess while the priest fulfills the aspects of the God.

As I have worked as priestess and as priest, Mouse and I have had many conversations about these roles. We practice ritual as the interplay of Male and Female. Sometimes the ritual is about the Goddess. In those, I am the center, as priestess. Sometimes the ritual is about the God. In those Mouse is in the foreground, as priest. The energies are different. The feeling, the energy and the ritual *are* different due to the energies with which we are working and feeling.

The God has as many aspects as the Goddess because He is Her partner and Her consort. He is lover, youth, babe, elder, grandfather, father, sage. He is the hunter, the fool, the clown, the warrior, the magician, the farmer, the skilled workman and so much more. If you can name a quality of man, the God fulfills it. If you can name a quality of woman and the Goddess, the God has an aspect that shadows it, complements it or enriches it. It is the dance of the God and Goddess.

MEDITATION AND RITUAL

I choose to explore of the Sacred Masculine through rituals centered in meditation because it allows us to clear our minds of daily fretting to communicate and commune with the Divine that is within us and around us. We can open ourselves up to the possibility that the God is everywhere and not like the God described to us by others.

Meditation is an experience akin to prayer. We move our mind into a clear frame of thought, where our spirit merges with our intellect. With every deep breath, our body tunes into this melding. As our breath deepens and fills our body, our mind and spirit flow and greet the energies of the Universe. In that moment of confluence, we are all united. We are all part of the One. We listen with our hearts, hear with our souls and remember with our bodies. Meditation is an experience that inspires awe and wonder, and it is an experience triggered simply with a few breaths and a few guiding words. We can all meditate.

Meditation is an attainable skill. If you daydream, imagine, fantasize, then you can meditate. If, during a meditation, you lose focus and find yourself in your

daily life worrying about the grocery list, the football scores or the dog, do not waste time castigating yourself. Simply move your mind back to the meditation. I will bet that even the Dali Lama has days when all he can think about is chocolate ice-cream or his itching nose.

I have situated meditations within ritual. However, they may be done outside ritual at any time and any place. Placing the meditative work within ritual is important. As the seeker, you are doing important, soul-changing work. Our experiences in meditation are often very intense. Within ritual space, we invite our spirit allies and the spirits of this world and the other worlds to be with us to help and protect us. Those spirits serve as witnesses to our profound changes and guide us through the more difficult parts. When we ask our guides and the spirits to join us in our work of the soul, it is an honor for them and it is an action of deep respect for us.

Though we may not realize it, ritual is very important in our lives. Ritual practiced consciously brings the body, mind and spirit together in exploration of the Sacred. When we consciously look at an issue or emotion within a ritual context, we make that issue and that action sacred. It becomes important and sacred because we state it through our intent and our awareness. We have many unconscious rituals in our lives. For instance, you may come home from work and turn on the television. You may get up in the morning and have a cup of coffee. It may be merely a routine. It can become a sacred ritual when you choose to consciously watch yourself prepare the coffee, pour it in the cup and then drink it deliberately. If you savor every sip and taste and thank the spirits for that wonderful coffee, you have had a ritual. You have heightened your awareness

of your everyday action. You have called your Divine self to attention. The result is an expanded awareness. You may notice for the first time that your cup has a little chip. You may notice that the coffee sipped slowly has a nutty flavor that covers your tongue like a layer of brown earth over stone, or you may notice the sun shining in through the window before which you are standing. This myriad of details noticed becomes a blessing from the Spirit as you celebrate your first cup of coffee.

By taking our intellectual explorations of the God and centering them in ritual, we make that part of the Sacred. One Friday evening at a National Women Studies Association Meeting, I went to a Shabbat, facilitated by a woman rabbi. This was at a time when women rabbis and cantors were still an anomaly so this traditional Jewish women's ceremony had a deep meaning and power.

Many of the women, all university professors, wept openly. One woman told me that it was so wonderful to rediscover the religion of her childhood as celebrated by women. That change opened her up to a whole new meaning of the ritual and of what it meant to be spiritual, and she felt the ritual in her emotions, in her intellect and in her body.

Rituals are important. Many of the world's mainstream religions have powerful ones. In some cases, the meanings have been lost and the celebrants no longer feel the Sacred. Before we pagans get too smug, know that we also often take our rituals for granted. I am amused sometimes when I go to a ritual and "The Charge of the Goddess" is read. When the priestess gets to the part that says, "Be ye naked in your rites," I look around. I do not see anyone taking off their clothes, and in the cold upstate New York winters, I

rarely see skyclad witches reading the charge. I have now learned a deeper meaning to the charge's words: that to come before the God and Goddess, we must shed our needs, desires, resentment and anger. In doing this, we do become naked, stripped of our protections. We stand before Them as we truly are. The words are beautiful and we need to maintain our attention to their meaning or our rituals will lose their power.

Sometimes rituals lose their power because we have forgotten that we are Divine and therefore Sacred. Wicca and other pagan spiritualities teach us that we can say with assurance, "I am God. I am Goddess." Through ritual, the Divine within works with the Divine outside of us. That union brings us all into harmony with the Universe, where we are all part of the One. In ritual, the partnership of the Divine within and without is truly a magical one.

So how does one go about doing a ritual? As a beginner, I began self-consciously... and at breakneck speed. My background is fundamental Christian and Baptist, so my concept of ritual is that it should be simple and bare bones. I am happy and comfortable with simple rituals. Others, raised in more elaborate rituals, may desire more complex ceremonies. Whenever you do a ritual that I have written, please feel free to add or subtract, or to create more. If you do not like what I have done, then do what you like.

There are other ways to do ritual, though much of the format detailed here is standard. You cast a circle, call in the spirits of the four directions, call in the Deities, do the central working, raise a cone of power and then bid the powers farewell. When I teach ritual basics, I draw concentric circles on a sheet of paper, illustrating the journey inward and the journey outward.

What you do inward, you undo on the way out, creating symmetry, balance and harmony.

Following are the basic elements of ritual with a short explanation of each. I refer to the people performing the ritual as celebrants, because within ritual we each celebrate and acknowledge our relationship to the Divine. We are not performers reciting memorized lines. We are spiritual creatures meeting with our Divine partners.

Creating Sacred Space:

This is your intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual preparation of yourself and of the space where you will do ritual. The purpose is to create a safe, uninterrupted space and to ready yourself for the spiritual work before you do it.

One year during a beginning Wicca class, the group assembled to do the first ritual. We had already set up the altar, cleansed the space and assigned the various parts of the ritual, and we were getting ready to center ourselves in preparation for casting the circle. The class was fairly large and, although some of the members knew each other, many did not. We sat in the circle to begin the ritual and several members had to leave it to get something they had forgotten. One person was too cold. Another person needed a pillow for her back. This went on until some class members got annoyed. I pointed out that this is why I call it creating sacred space. We need to get our daily needs out of our system before we can pay attention to the ritual and the sacred work.

Casting the Circle:

A circle is cast around the physical space. It takes the celebrants to a safe and sacred place for their ritual. Because we move ourselves outside of time and space and into union with the Universe, this place is commonly called “between the worlds.” Circles are cast in a variety of ways, using the mind to cast a colored light around the space, walking around the space with an athame or broom, or by using one’s breath. Chants, songs and poems may be spoken to call attention to the fact that sacred work is being done. You move clockwise, or deosil, around the circle. Once the circle is cast, you always move deosil around the circle to keep the energy going in the same direction. Moving back and forth disrupts the intensity of the work.

Summon the Guardians and Elementals of the Directions:

These are the spirits found in the corners of the world, which are East, West, North, and South. Some traditions also include Above, Below and Center. Each of these directions has correspondences and affinities. Over the years, with study and practice, I have developed my own associations. I encourage you to do the same. You can find lists of associations in many books on Wicca, on websites, or you can take a deep breath to find your own associations inside you. East is the place of new beginnings, of air, and of dawn. East is associated with the intellect, imagination and with communication. The suit of Swords (sometimes Wands) is associated with the East as are the astrological signs of Aquarius, Gemini and Libra—air signs. South is the place of fire, and the time of day associated with it is midday or noon. South is associated with will and

accomplishment, with creativity and passion. The suit of Wands (sometimes Swords) is associated with the South, as are the astrological signs of Aires, Leo and Sagittarius—fire signs. Correspondences for West are the place of sunset, emotions and water. It is associated with the emotions, the heart, sensuality, and relationships. The suit of Cups is associated with the West, as are the astrological signs of Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio—water signs. North is the place of midnight and of earth. The North is associated with silence, death, sexuality and rebirth. The suit of Pentacles is associated with the North, as are the astrological signs of Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn—earth signs.

The Guardians of the Directions are the spirits and creatures of the astral worlds that help us in our magic. We create with them, and we meld the physical world with the worlds of spirit. The elementals are the spirits of this world who work with us to create magic. They are the active energies of those elements. Sylphs are the elementals of air. Salamanders are the elementals of fire. Undines are the elementals of water, and gnomes are the elementals of earth. Often I am asked what these elementals look like. I cannot give a definitive answer. I perceive their energies and they look a particular way to me, but they may appear differently to you.

This is an opportunity for you to be very creative. As you experience these energies, the words will come to you. Release your poetic self and create poetry and prose from deep within your soul. Be polite. Even though I use the word summon, we call on these spirits in a polite, respectful way. They are our partners in divine work and they are very powerful in their own right. They deserve our awe and wonder.

Evoke the Goddess and Evoke the God:

Evoking means you are inviting the God and the Goddess into your circle to assist you with your ritual and to help you accomplish the changes you need or want. Call on Deities that correspond with the emotion or issue with which you are working. You call on Hades when you are working on grief. It would not be appropriate to call on Him if you were working on a relationship or on love. You may also call on Deities more generically, using Mother, Father, Brother and Sister. Again, always be respectful and polite.

Center and Ground:

Centering is finding your center and moving calmly into a peaceful state where you slough off everyday cares and woes before moving into a sacred state where your mind, body and spirit are connected. In ritual, you do this wherever it is most needed. Because the meditations tend to be intense, you need to be centered and free of distraction. For that reason, I have chosen to put the centering and grounding before them. Other celebrants may choose to center and ground immediately after the circle is cast. If you need to feel particularly centered and grounded, it is a good idea to do so early in the ritual, and then again before the meditation.

You center and ground to ready yourself for the work. You can do this by breathing deeply then letting your breath come out in a single tone, such as, “OMMMMM.” Grounding connects you with the earth and with the greater universe.

This is a grounding meditation:

Center yourself by breathing deeply three times. The first two breaths are exhaled noisily as you shake off the

everyday world. The third breath comes out as “OMMMMMMM.” Stand lightly and wiggle your feet and toes. See tree roots growing out of your heels and toes and see those roots go deeply through the floor into the ground below. See the roots deepen into the Earth, through rocks and soil until they come to an anchoring place. Wrap your roots lightly and firmly around that anchoring place deep in the Earth. See the roots of your toes extend laterally outward, not far underground, providing you with a steadiness in the world. Feel the sap rise into your trunk, filling your legs, torso and head with the nurturing power of the Earth. Lift up your arms and feel branches extend from your fingers outward toward the sky. See in your branches your past, your present and your future. See the scars and see the new growth. Feel the sap energy move through your neck into your head. From your crown, this energy bursts forth. As it moves into the universe, another light from far out in the universe comes to meet it. See that energy move together. You are connected to All that is.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

This is a conscious statement of the intended work. One of my teachers always made us state our intentions three times before we began a meditation or other meditative work. It helped us pay attention, sealed our intention and made the meditations more effective and intense.

The Work:

This is the vehicle that moves your intention into reality. It can be a meditation, song, dance, shamanic journey, prayer or sacred drama. In this book, it is a meditation.

Raise the Cone of Power:

This is the point where the work you did manifests. The cone of power is raised. When ready, it blasts I into the universe to do the work we intended. The cone of power is achieved by singing or chanting that grows louder and faster and is combined with movement that also increases in speed. In writing rituals, I always use a “WHOOOSH” to symbolize the cone of power going into the Universe. It has become a running joke with my closest circle friends and we call it one of our “ritual technical terms.”

Cakes and Ale:

This is a time to pause and reflect and to give thanks. You can write down what you have learned or experienced. It is important to eat and drink something at this point because the food and drink will ground you, and through that grounding the spiritual work you have done becomes a physical reality. The food does not have to be cakes and ale but can be any kind of food and drink that grounds you. Often in my circles, we choose food that corresponds with the work or the seasons. We may have apple juice and corn muffins in the fall or iced tea and watermelon in the summer.

Center and Ground:

As I have said before, you cannot ground too often. After a strong ritual, this centering and grounding helps us to reconnect with the world outside the circle and to avoid a spacey feeling that can happen after intense spiritual work.

Farewell to the God and Farewell to the Goddess:

Thank Them and bless Them for Their assistance, love and support. Give Them your gratitude and your blessings.

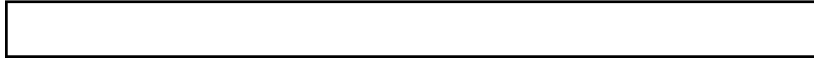
Farewell to the Guardians and Elementals of the Directions:

Thank the Guardians and Elementals for their attendance and assistance in your ritual. In recent years, I have added the phrase, “Go with our thanks and our blessings,” because I believe that these spirits want to work with us as much as we want them to work with us. We augment and bless their lives in ways we cannot know and I think they appreciate not only the thanks but the blessings as well.

Open the Circle:

Whatever you did at the beginning, do backwards. You open the circle by going counterclockwise—or widdershins—around the circle. You are now moving your circle back into the physical world.

In the next chapter, you will find a ritual for the first steps in your journey to the sun and the experience of the Sacred Masculine as a joyful dance of wonder and awe.



YOU ARE THE SUN RITUAL

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOD

Create Sacred Space:

Spend some time in the daylight thinking about the God and what He means to you. Is the God something you ignore because of your background in mainstream religions? In your excitement to embrace the Goddess, did you forget to spend time with the God? Or perhaps you spend a great deal of time balancing the Masculine and Feminine. Whatever you currently do, focus now on the God. What symbols do you associate with the God and the Masculine? Begin collecting God artifacts. In Nature, what is masculine to you? Try doing this ritual at different times during the day and during different seasons.

Cast the circle:

Walk deosil (sunwise) around the circle carrying a yellow candle or something that symbolizes the God.

Chant, “A circle is cast,” as you walk. Walk around your space three times.

Summon the Guardians and Elemental:

Summon the East:

“Great Eastern Powers of the Breezes, join me in my sacred rite. Bring an understanding of the sun at dawn, bright energy of beginnings. Flickering in the air of dawn, sylphs, flying ones, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the joy of discovery and of newness. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Great Power of the South and of the Hot Summer, join me in my sacred rite. Bring an understanding of the sun at noon, burning hot and creative. Bright creatures of fire, salamanders, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the forging heat of creative fire and the burning of desire. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Great Western Power of the Seas, join me in my sacred rite. Bring an understanding of sunset, and the end of the day, the beginning of night. Diving deep and swimming into our hearts, undines, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the knowledge of the heart, washed clean by the sea. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Great Power of the North and of the Cold Winter, join me in my sacred rite. Bring an understanding of the sun at midnight, hidden from view but always in our hearts. Burrowers into the Earth, terriers and gnomes,

join me in my sacred circle. Bring the knowledge that even in the dark ground, the sun reaches us. Hail and welcome.”

Evoke the Goddess:

“Lady Iris, Messenger of the Gods and Goddess of the Rainbow, join me in my sacred rite. Join me and bring to my circle the joy of the dance of color and light. Hail and welcome.”

Evoke the God:

“Helios, Burning Bright God of the Sun and All the Gods That You Are, join me in my sacred rite. Bring to my circle an understanding of the sun, of wildness and of joy. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take three breaths, and with each breath, cast your awareness throughout your body. Take another deep breath and then expel all of the air in your lungs with a huge sigh. Take another breath then expel it with a loud noise. Take a third breath and then expel it with the tone of “Om.” Close your eyes. Feel the tone of “Om” vibrate through your body. See the tone become visible as circles of color, bubbles of color. Notice the bubbles’ colors and that they are whirling around in a beautiful dance. Scan your body and see it filled with these bubbles. Feel the effervescence. Cast your awareness down to your feet and feel the energy of Mother Earth reach into you. See what that looks like. See the energy of the Mother dance with your own bubbly energy. Feel the dance and see it fill your body. Feel your vibrations meld with those of the Mother. As you are filled with the energy of the Mother and Her energy

melds with your own, cast your awareness to your crown. See that combined energy reach out of your crown. Feel the energy of the sun, the Universe, reach down and meld with the energy of you/Mother and embrace you. See that energy combine into a dance of light, color, and vibration. Feel the hum of your energy, the Mother, and the Universe. Feel it fill your body and move in harmony with it. You are connected, grounded in the Mother and embraced by the Universe. When you are ready, open your eyes.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“I know the Moon and Her cycles. Today, I want to enrich my understanding of the Sun and of the Sacred Male. I wish to understand the richness of the sunlit world and how the Dark and the Light dance together.”

Meditation:

Close your eyes and take a centering breath. Slowly, your awareness tells you that you are standing in your favorite place in the world. It is dawn and the light is overtaking the day. You see the beauty of the dawn as the light grows and grows. Coming toward you from the East is a creature of the Sun. Notice how the creature approaches and stands in front of you. You greet each other. This Eastern Sun creature becomes the God. Notice how He greets you. Talk and share your wisdom. Ask Him what you need to know about the sun and about the East. Listen....

Then He bids you goodbye and you turn toward the South. It is noon now. Coming toward you from the South is a creature of the Sun. Notice how the creature approaches and stands in front of you. You greet each other. This Southern Sun creature becomes the

God. Notice how He greets you. Talk and share your wisdom. Ask Him what you need to know about the Sun and about the South. Listen....

Then He bids you goodbye, and you turn toward the West. It is sunset now. Coming toward you from the West is a creature of the Sun. Notice how the creature approaches and stands in front of you. You greet each other. This Western Sun creature becomes the God. Notice how He greets you. Talk and share your wisdom. Ask Him what you need to know about the sun and about the West. Listen....

Then He will bid you goodbye and you turn toward the North. It is midnight now. Coming toward you from the North is a creature of the sun. Notice how the creature approaches and stands in front of you. You greet each other. This Northern Sun creature becomes the God. Notice how He greets you. Talk and share your wisdom. Ask Him what you need to know about the Sun and about the North. Listen....

When it is time to return, the Northern God bids you goodbye and gives you a gift from all that you have met in this encounter. You have a gift for Him too. Bid Him good-bye, or God-bye, and whirl around once. When you come to a stop, you realize that all four of the Sun Gods are standing around you, encircling you in Their embrace. You all smile and laugh, full of mirth and sunshine. Breathe and feel that energy....

Then all four merge together and move inside your body. You feel the energy of the Sun God inside you. Get up and dance. Dance the knowledge of the East. Dance the knowledge of the South. Dance the knowledge of the West. Dance the knowledge of the North. When the separate dances are done, stand still and stretch your arms up high, toward the sun. Feel the

energy of the Sun in the length and breadth of yourself. Say, “I am the Sun.” As you move to the warmth and heat of the Sun, say this over and over. Feel that energy and know that it is wild. Feel that energy and know that it is Masculine. Know that you are God. When you are done, take three centering breaths. Open your eyes to the daylight and the sunlight. Breathe to center and come back to the here and now.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Stand in the East. Imagine you are the chariot of the Sun. As the chariot of the Sun, rise in the East and move to the South. Set in the West and then rest in the North. Walk around the circle as the chariot of the Sun, chanting, “I rise in the East, I burn in the South, I set in the West and rest in the North.” Go faster and faster around the circle, until you feel the energy build and then *whoosh* into the Universe.

Cakes and Ale:

Be sure to eat and drink a little as you ground and think about your meditation. And thank the spirits with a prayer: “Great ones of all the directions, Lord and Lady, thank You for this food and the energy it brings. Thank you, Sun Lord, for the wisdom of knowing that I am God. Blessed Be.”

Center and Ground:

Take three cleansing breaths. Cast your awareness up and down your body and see the energy of the Mother and the Universe combined with yours. Feel for a moment the vibration and harmony of that energy. Cast your awareness up to the Universe and gently disconnect from the embrace of the God, knowing that

you can always experience this connection. Cast your awareness downward to the Mother and gently disconnect, knowing that you can always reconnect with Her. Scan your body and feel your energy vibrating through you. Take all you need and if necessary, ground some into the Earth. Breathe again and come back to the circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Mighty Helios, Great Lord of the Sun. Thank You for Your presence in my sacred rite and for all the knowledge I have gained. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Bright Iris, Lady of the Rainbow, thank You for Your presence in my sacred rite and the help that You gave me. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:

Farewell to the North: “

Power of Winter and of the Midnight Sun, thank you for the wisdom you brought to my sacred circle. Gnomes and creatures of the soil, thank you for your presence here. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Power of the Sunset and the Darkening Skies, thank you for the wisdom you brought to my sacred circle. Undines and creatures of the waters, thank you for your presence here. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

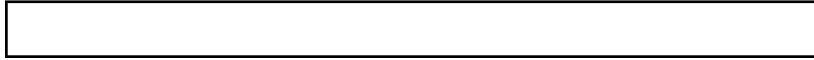
“Power of the Noonday Sun and of the Burning Fire, thank you for the wisdom you brought to my sacred circle. Salamanders and creatures who burn bright and true, thank you for your presence here. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Power of the Bright Dawn and of the Sultry Breezes, thank you for the wisdom you brought to my sacred circle. Sylphs and creatures of the air, thank you for your presence here. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Walk three times widdershins, carrying your sun symbol, chanting, “The circle is open but unbroken.”



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

THE GOD IN CAPRICORN

We begin the first steps of exploring the Sacred Masculine in the earth sign of Capricorn. Deep in winter at Yule, the God is born. The days have been getting shorter and shorter and the sun shines dimly and quietly. It seems that the sun no longer has the power to warm us and is powerless against the winter. The landscape is very bleak. Human beings feel the darkness in their souls and long for some light. At Solstice, the sun moves and the light begins its return to our lives.

Not visible to us, Yule brings us back into the light. The days, unnoticed, lengthen by seconds and minutes. We know this in our bones and from our science, so we celebrate the return of the light. Pagans celebrate Yule and Christians celebrate Christmas. These holidays in the midst of cold remind us that there is light, there is mirth and there are gifts. The gifts we give to each other mirror the gifts the Universe gives to us. It is in this cold, mirth-filled holiday that the baby God, born on Yule, begins His first days. As He grows, the days

grow. In the cold days of Capricorn, He cries and cuddles, seeking our warmth and giving us joy.

Capricorn is an earth sign that begins in deep winter. The earth is cold and hard in Capricorn. Those born under this sign like a lot of structure and want solidness and security. Capricorns like lots of answers before they begin something new, and embracing change is often difficult for them. Their love of structure allows Capricorns to build great things like a very complex structure or a life. Building things, tangible and intangible, requires both flexibility and structure. A bridge, for example, must be rigid enough to stay up for decades, allowing the traffic to go over it, but it must also be flexible enough to expand and contract with weather and to sway with the wind. Bridges must have their foundations firmly and securely embedded in the earth to sustain the weight of the objects they carry. They must also be flexible to withstand the storms that will assail them. Bridges get us to and from. Bridges take us to adventures, and to new things, and then they carry us home.

Engineers and builders of all kinds innately combine vision and attention to detail. The hallmark of Capricorn is good design coupled with the vision to make it happen. It takes boldness and confidence to envision a dream, and then make it real. We must drop our inhibitions and doubts to move into our dream. This movement is a dance of exuberance and joy, part of the ecstatic nature of the God.

Through their ability to use structure to create, Capricorns take us into adventure and can save our lives. The God, in His infancy, establishes firm foundations and security. He seeks warmth and nourishment as He establishes His beginnings. He begins the

great adventure of His life by building foundations for the structures that will sustain Him and move Him.

Capricorn begins the life of the God and begins the calendar year. January is named for the Janus, the Roman God of beginnings. Because He came before Jupiter, the King of the Gods, He was often called Pater Janus. His name means “gate.” He was the God of gates and doors, symbolizing comings and goings, beginnings and endings. He has come to represent the change from primitive life to civilization, from country to city, and from peace to war and war to peace. He was both guardian and witness to the lives of the humans that passed through His gates.

Janus is shown with two visages; one facing the past and the other facing the future. In older depictions, one face has a beard and the other is beardless. This may be a symbol of the moon and the sun. Over time, His name has come to mean “two-faced.” It is the original story of beginning and ending that helps us understand His role as a God. This role is the one who honors our comings, our goings, our living, and our dying. He is married to Jana, a Moon Goddess. Together, They watch over the first events in our lives such as the first minute, the first day, and the first hour. By extension, They watch over our premier events, the first step, the first fall, the first love, the first cry, and the first laugh. The God is there in all the beginnings from our first breath and cry, to our guard and protect our need for security and love.

The ritual that follows is designed to help us experience the beginning and ending of life and to feel that Life is a wheel moving ever onward, encompassing things that end and things that begin. In experiencing beginnings, we feel freshness and newness. When a

new life or adventure comes to us, we see the grief of the past transform into hope.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN CAPRICORN

Create Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about the past and what you have learned. Think about what made you feel secure and what did not. Think about your foundations and what you have built on them. Are they flexible? Do they work? Imagine yourself as the newborn God and what it means to begin life as the Divine Child. Think about what has ended and what will begin. Do you make New Year's resolutions? If so, what do they mean for you? How does the success or failure of a resolution affect you? Do you learn the lesson and reap the benefit, or do you focus only on the failure or reward?

Cast the Circle:

Holding one brand new thing and one thing you no longer want, walk around the circle sunwise three times. When you stop, look forward and backward and say, "The circle is cast and I am between the worlds."

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Sons and Daughters of the Eastern Realm, Children of the Bright Dawn, join me in my sacred circle, and bring an understanding of the joy of beginning. Sylphs, playful sprites of the early morn, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon of the South:

“Brothers and Sisters of the Southern Realm, of the Bright Sunlit Land, join me in my sacred circle and bring the passion of new creation. Salamanders, hot and saucy beings of the fire, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Fathers and Mothers of the Western Realm, of the Setting Sun, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the understanding of accomplishment and of the waning day. Undines, splashing in the shallows and the deep, bring the delights of the heart and soul. Join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Grandfathers and Grandmothers of the Far Northern Realm, of the Midnight Sun, join me in my sacred circle, and bring the understanding of endless light and lighted night. Gnomes, digging and excavating in the dark, join me in my sacred circle. Bring an understanding of structure and accomplishment. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Jana, Bright Goddess of the Moon, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the joy of discovery and of the bright hope of each new beginning. Hail and welcome.

Summon the God:

“Janus, God of the Gates, of Comings and Goings, join me in my sacred circle. Bring an understanding of balance, of coming and going, of left and right, backwards and forwards. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take three deep breaths. Stand solidly and cast your awareness up and down your body. See yourself as a bridge, solid and strong. Feel the structure of your cement and steel. Feel the pilings go deep into the earth, and send your awareness down with them. Go deep within the heart of the Mother. Deep. Anchor yourself there, and pull the energy up through the pilings into the structure itself. Feel the sun reach down and warm your structure. Feel yourself expand in the embrace of the Universe. Connect with that energy. Feel yourself in the embrace of the Universe and in the love of the Mother. Feel yourself there, grounded in the love of the Mother and embraced by the love of the Universe.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“Here I am at the beginning of the calendar year. Another year has come and gone, too quickly and too slowly. My intent here is to celebrate the gateway between the beginning and the ending. As I look backward and I look forward, I see all.”

Meditation:

Take three deep breaths. Take one more deep breath and close your eyes. Soon your awareness shows you that you are standing at a tall gate in the dark. Notice your surroundings and the sounds around you. The sun begins to rise and dawn spreads across the land. Look at the gate and note what you see. Notice that there is a face in the gate before you. It is the God, Janus. Notice Him. What does He look like? Speak to Him. He will speak to you. Listen....

When the time is right, He will tell you to go through the gate. Go through the gate. What is on the other side? Notice everything. It is noon now. Turn around and see the gate that is behind you. You will see a face on the gate. It is the God, Janus. Speak to Him. He will speak to you. Listen....

It is now sunset and it becomes dark again. Janus will speak to you of your endings, the things that have gone before. Listen....

When the time is right, He will tell you to go back through the gate, back to the beginning. Go through the gate. The voice of Janus follows you and tells you of your beginnings. Listen.

When the time is right, He will give you the gift of a story about you and your walk with the God. Listen and remember....

When it is time, bid Janus good-bye with a gift and thanks. It is midnight and time for sleep. Take a deep breath and then another. Open your eyes, and you are back in the here and now.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Holding your new and old objects, reflect on what you have learned in the meditation. One word will

emerge. As you stand and move, chant that word. Get louder and faster until you feel the energy move through you and *whoosh* out into the Universe.

Cakes and Ale:

Take the time to eat and drink something. Say a prayer of thanksgiving: “Wise Janus who sees the whole of our beginnings and endings, thank You for the wisdom I have gained. May this drink and food nourish me at the beginning of new wisdom. Blessed be.”

Center and Ground:

Take three breaths and see yourself as the bridge again. Cast your awareness down through the ground and feel your anchor and your connection to the Mother. Gently disconnect the anchor, knowing that you can always reconnect with the Mother. Feel the sun warming your bridge back and feel the embrace of the Universe. Rest there a minute and then gently disconnect yourself from the embrace, knowing you can always connect with the Universe. Take two breaths, feel your energy and return to the circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Janus, two-faced and wise, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Thank you for the wisdom of my endings and beginnings. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess: “

Bright Jana, Shining Goddess Overseeing the Night, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and Elementals:

Farewell to the North:

“Grandfathers and Grandmothers of the Wintery Realms of the North, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Creatures of the earth, gnomes thank you for the wisdom of grounding. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to West:

“Mothers and Fathers of the Watery Realms of the West, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Swimming creatures, undines, thank you for your presence and the wisdom of the heart. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Sisters and Brothers of the Fiery Realms of the South, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Creatures of the fire, salamanders, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle and the wisdom of the will. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Sons and Daughters of the Airy Realms of the East, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Creatures of the wind, sylphs, thank you for your presence and the wisdom of clarity. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Carrying your objects from the past and the future, old and new, walk widdershins around the circle. Say, “The circle is open but unbroken.” Blessed Be.

CHANGING TO THE WILD

THE GOD IN AQUARIUS

We blow like the wind into Aquarius, the Water-Bearer for our next adventure in the Sacred Masculine. The days are getting noticeably longer and we delight in them. At the same time, winter seems to have tightened its grip on our lives. We have longer days and more light but we do *not* see a rise in temperatures. Snows lies on the ground and the landscape may seem dead to us.

One of the first things I read when I began walking the pagan path was a poem about this time of year. The poem said that above the ground, it is bleak and cold and still dark, but underneath the seeds are safe and warm. The seeds are beginning to germinate. The seeds are beginning to make their long journey to the surface. I always try to connect with the deep underground to feel the excitement of growth that is happening below our feet.

Into this landscape toddles the God. He takes His first baby steps in Aquarius and begins to speak.

Aquarius is an air sign, the sign of communication, clairvoyance and most of all, of clarity. By using all His senses, His intellect and His intuition, the God finds clarity of thought and of purpose. In learning to communicate, the God begins to learn there are rules. As an infant, the world was full of warmth, gratification and safety. Now He is learning that there are barriers and obstacles. He learns to speak so that He can navigate through this world. He learns *No!* and uses it frequently.

This purposefulness and sense of purpose give Aquarius people the passion for change and reform. Like the seed below the ground, reformers work to bring change and growth to their society. As the seed germinates, it breaks through the shell of the seed and destroys it. The green shoot pushes its way upward, pushing aside stones and soil. Think of the tremendous amount of power and sense of purpose that movement requires.

The same is true of humans trying to change society. *No!* they say. It cannot be this way anymore. They anger others; they push people aside. Often, they may destroy the shells that protect us from change. All of that takes tremendous power and sense of purpose, and a sense of self. It is not easy to go against the grain of society. It takes inspiration and courage.

During Aquarius, the Romans celebrated the festival of Lupercalia, the festival of the God Faunus, God of Wild Nature. Faunus is also the God of agriculture, prophecy, fertility and country life. He gave oracles to those who sought advice. He is accompanied by fauns, creatures that are half men and half goats and is depicted wearing wolf skin, wreath and holding a goblet. He is the energy of raw Nature, instinct and passion.

He is also the energy of gentle rains and growth. It is interesting to me that He is both the God of Wild Nature and the God of Tamed Nature (agriculture). He contains the Light and the Dark in His being. His wife is Flora, the Goddess of sexuality, flowers and spring-time.

Does it seem out of place to celebrate agriculture in the long dark of winter?

If we stretch ourselves, it is not. In the wild woods, the deer are still rutting and running wild. We encounter them as we drive through the countryside. In my yard, I can hear owls, though I've never seen one. This year, there have been lots and lots of rabbit tracks and a few times, rabbit tracks with blood. Someone became prey in the wildness of my back yard.

And underneath this wildness is an even more powerful wildness, the germinating seed. On its way up, pushing to become a plant or a tree. The wildness of Nature gets tamed into agriculture later in the year, just as the toddling God will learn more socialization as the year goes on.

Now, however, it is time to celebrate the wild of the dark and of deep winter. We are in the dark but know that the day is imminent.

The ritual that follows brings us to the point of wildness and into the ecstatic world of the Sacred Masculine. We are bold and adventurous.

GIVING BIRTH TO THE WILD

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN AQUARIUS

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time meditating on your wild nature and your tame nature. Where do you feel that your wildness was suppressed inappropriately? What would you change? When have you acted with wildness, with abandon? Go outdoors, if you can, and dance with abandon—turn and twist as the wild nature takes you. What is that like?

Spend some more time meditating on your cultivated (tamed) nature. Where has your wild nature become cultivated appropriately? Can you do that and still be wild? As you do the ritual, wear a wreath in your hair, or a flower or leaf.

Cast the Circle:

Hold your goblet high in the air and walk deosil three times around the circle. Chant, “A circle is cast,” as you walk.

Summon the Directions:

Summon the East:

“Light Ones of the East, Guardians of Thought and Intuition, join me in my sacred rite. Sylphs, creatures of

light and laughter, join me in my sacred rite. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

Fiery Ones of the South, Guardians of Will and Passion, join me in my sacred rite. Salamanders, creatures of light and magic, join me in my sacred rite. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Watery Ones of the West, Guardians of Sensuality and Psychic Powers, join me in my sacred rite. Undines, creatures of dark and pleasure, join me in my sacred rite. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

Earthly Ones of the North, Guardians of the Seed and Death, join me in my sacred rite. Gnomes, creatures of Dark and death, join me in my sacred rite. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Lovely Flora, Great Lover Goddess, Guardian of the Leaf and Flower, join me in my sacred rite and bring the wisdom of growth and the pleasure of the seed, the plant and the fruit. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Wild Faunus, God of the wild, God of the fields, Guardian of Our Joy at Play, join me in my sacred rite and bring the joy of abandonment and the pleasure of growth. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take three deep breaths, expelling the last one with a tone. As the last vibrations of the tone fade, see that sound become thousands of tiny circles vibrating in tune with you. Feel those circles vibrate through your whole body so that you vibrate in perfect harmony. Cast your awareness down to your feet and send out roots down through the floor into the ground below. Feel the energy of Mother Earth vibrate and welcome you. See the Earth vibration as tiny circles. Anchor your root and pull the energy of the Mother up, into your being. Feel the vibrations of the mother combine with yours until you vibrate in harmony. See the merging of your energies as the circles dance together. Cast your awareness upward, through your uplifted arms and your crown, feel your energy combined with that of the Earth move upward to the Universe. Feel the Universe reach down and embrace you. The energy of the Universe vibrates in harmony with your energy and with the Earth's. Feel that harmonious energy and see it dance and tiny circles. Open your eyes and come back to your circle, centered in yourself and grounded in the love of the Earth and the Universe. Blessed Be.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

"I am a creature of the Universe, beloved of the Mother and of the God in all His Light and Darkness. I am wild. I am wild."

Meditation:

If possible, begin curled up in a ball and, as the meditation progresses, move your body in harmony with the experience of the meditation.

It is deep winter and the Dark is very much with you. You are not cold but you are very aware of the fact that it is the deepest part of winter. As you cast your awareness around your environment, you realize that you are curled up inside a very hard seed. At first it seems like a wonderful contained space that holds you protected. Then, you have the urge to twitch. You want to move. You move your arms and legs and connect with the hard edge of the seed. You push and push and push. You push more. Suddenly the hard edge breaks away and part of you is free. You wiggle and wiggle and wiggle until you have shed all the bits of the seed. Stay for a moment surrounded by the protection of the Earth. Stretch your arms upward. Two strong hands grasp yours and pull you upward. Those strong hands pull you up until you shoot forth into the deep winter landscape. You are pulled into the laughing embrace of Faunus. Feel that embrace and the exuberance. He then leads you into a wild dance. You and He dance, dance, dance and dance. You give yourself over to the dance and the wildness of it. With Faunus, you dance across the land, seeing and observing.

When at last the dance is done, He hands you a goblet full of deep red wine. He toasts you. You toast Him. Drink deeply of the wine and feel the energy that went into making it. Take a deep breath and ask Him for an oracle. Listen. And then embrace Him once more and walk towards the light of the dawn.

Take three deep breaths, open your eyes and come back to your sacred circle.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Stand and shake yourself out until you are really flexible. Slither around the circle (or in place), feeling that you are boneless. Start to dance wildly (or turn

around and around and around), feeling the rhythm of the wild in your being. Tone. Start at a very deep note and tone. Until you get louder and faster. (Keep moving.) *Ah.... Whoosh!* The power goes out into the Universe. Blessed Be.

Cakes and Ale:

Be sure to ground by eating something. This is also a good time to write down your thoughts and perceptions. You will be surprised how much you will forget. Hold the drink and food up and say, “Lady Flora, bless this food and drink. May it nourish me and give me pleasure. Lord Faunus, bless this food and drink. May I relish every bite and every sip. Blessed Be.”

Center and Ground:

Take three breaths with the last one being a tone. Cast your awareness back to the vibrations of the tone and see that you are still connected to the Universe and the Earth by the circles dancing inside your being. Cast your awareness upward and detach yourself—very gently—from the embrace of the Universe, knowing that the love of the Universe is always with you. Breathe and cast your awareness through your body and down to your feet. Go downward to where your roots are anchored and gently disconnect your roots. Know that you are always anchored in the love of the Mother. Take a deep breath and come back to your sacred circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Faunus, Lord of the Wild, Seer and Prophet. Thank You for Your presence in my circle and the wisdom You brought me about being wild and tame. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Lady Flora, Devoted Guardian of Our Happiness, thank You for Your presence in my circle and the wisdom You brought me about growth and joy. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Directions:**Farewell to the North:**

“Guardians of the North, Gnomes of the Deep Earth, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians of the West, Undines of the Watery Depths, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Guardians of the South, Salamanders of the Fiery Noon, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

Guardians of the East, Sylphs of the Zephyrs, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Holding your goblet, walk three times widdershins around the circle. “The circle is open but unbroken. Blessed be.”

STIRRING THE POT

THE GOD IN PISCES

We swim into the water sign of Pisces, the sign of the Zodiac depicted by the two fish swimming together. Winter is still with us. Often there is a big storm, which seems surprising because we have turned our minds to spring. We page through seed and flower catalogs, planning or dreaming our gardens. Even if we do not actually plant those seeds, the dream of spring has begun.

When I lived in Maryland, all I had to do was hold out until March. Then, winter was over. No more danger of snow, ice and hazardous driving. By mid-March, the star magnolia planted by my front door would bloom, followed by daffodils and other glorious flowers. Here, in Upstate New York, there is still snow on the ground and the real threat of more snow in March. But some of the migratory birds have returned; you can feel Nature stirring, getting ready to burst forth with the wonderful energy of new growth. The animals are a little more visible now, hurrying, scurrying about their business. The return of spring is more of a fight here. That striving has a beauty and grace all its own.

The God bursts forth into this landscape. He does not merely walk; He bounces. He runs, plays and

tumbles through the world, joyously experiencing every sensation. Every possibility is available to Him. He is learning to express Himself and articulate His needs and His wants. His energy is inexhaustible. He is learning more and more about the world and the power of His light is beginning to burst forth.

In Pisces, the God begins to explore His emotions and how to communicate them. He finds the joy of stories and in storytelling. The beauty of words and the ability to shape them into stories fascinates Him. He delights in songs and stories, telling stories at every opportunity. “Tell Me the story of how I was born,” He demands. “Tell me a story. The stories delight and educate. Stories heal and illustrate our lessons. All our woes, joys, sorrows and pleasures are captured and reflected in stories.”

Storytellers have been revered in all cultures, occupying important social and political positions. In our society, we tell stories to each other. We have books, television and movies to tell us stories. Soap operas are often “my stories” to the people who watch them. Because of the universal bombardment of those media, we may begin to think that we have no talent and cannot tell stories. We do. Each of us has important experiences that, when fashioned into a story, will heal us and others.

In Elizabethan England, all courtiers were expected to write and perform poetry and other entertainments in order to educate through delight. Joy, healing and learning go together.

Of all the storytellers in legend, Taliesin is the most famous and revered. His ability is magical. His story begins before his birth with the Witch Goddess Cerridwen. She had two children. Her daughter was as

beautiful as could be, and Her son, Morfran, was uglier than anyone else. Cerridwen decided to use Her magical power to work the greatest spell in the world. She would transform Her son into a bard of such great talent that no one would notice his ugly face.

Assisted by a boy named Gwion, Cerridwen gathered all the necessary ingredients and put them into the Cauldron of Wisdom and Transformation. She sang and chanted the great spell. After a year-and-a-day, the first three drops of the potion would bring the drinker the wisdom and magic of all the ages, but the remainder of the potion would be poisonous. For a year, the boy stirred the pot. The brew became thicker and hotter. On the last day, Cerridwen slept. As the boy stirred the pot, three drops splattered on his hand and he put his thumb in his mouth. Immediately, he gained the wisdom of the ages—along with the certainty that Cerridwen would not rest until She killed him. He fled, using his new magical powers.

Soon he heard Her furious pursuit. He changed into a rabbit and ran away. She quickly turned Herself into a dog and gave chase. As he approached a river, he turned himself into a fish and dived into the water. She then changed into an otter and leapt into the water after him. He, in turn, leapt from the water and in mid-jump became a bird. She followed him as a hawk. Hotly pursued, the desperate Gwion saw a pile of wheat. He dived down and turned himself into a single grain of wheat. Cerridwen turned Herself into a hen and pecked at the wheat until She ate it all, including Gwion.

After a time, Cerridwen realized that She was with child and, since She had been with no man, She also realized that the child was Gwion. Her son, ugly in spirit as well as in body, urged Her to kill the child as soon as

it was born. She agreed. When She saw Her newborn, She loved him so much She could not kill him. But because She knew She could not keep him safe, She sewed him inside a bag and set him adrift in the ocean.

On May Eve, in a land distant from Cerridwen, the son of the king, Elphin, who was also the unluckiest man alive was fishing in a weir. After many hours without a catch, he turned to go and noticed something caught on a pole. He swam out to it and found the bag. He opened it, found a beautiful child, and exclaimed, “Taliesin!” which meant “radiant brow” in Welsh.

“Yes, that is a very good name” said the child.

Startled, Elphin almost dropped him.

On returning home to the court, Taliesin astounded them all with poetry and song. Elphin raised him as his son and the bard of the court. Elphin’s luck had truly changed.

Taliesin grew to manhood and had many magical adventures. He became bard to King Arthur and is the most famous storyteller of all time. His name is often adopted by singers and storytellers.

This wonderful tale and all the stories associated with the bard remind us of the beauty and the power of stories. Each of us has many stories within that express our emotions and passions. We have stories filled with love, greed, failure, success, joy, terror and power. We do not have to *be* our stories; we only have to tell them.

As we tell our stories we teach others, and through those stories we learn so much. As we open to the God and explore who He really is, we go beyond our fear to connection. Connection with the Divine, ourselves and each other. What we gain is our very own story of power and grace.

All rituals, including the one that follows, tell stories. Rituals tell the story of our souls. They help us write

and create the next installment, the next chapter of our lives. We are our stories and everything that is in them. We are the joy, the terror, the ecstasy, the sorrow and the love.

MY STORY, MY SOUL

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN PISCES

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about your story. What do you want to express to others? What do you want to keep to yourself? What would happen if you told your secret story? Would who you are and how you feel about yourself change? Why do you want to keep this story secret? The God and the Goddess know it and They still love you. If you tell this story, what will be better or worse? Find a rock and tell your story to it. Then ask the rock what it knows about that story. Listen and remember. Bring that rock into the circle with you.

Cast the Circle:

Carrying water in a small bowl, move deosil around the circle. Go around once, chanting, “By the babe who is the God, I cast the circle.” Go around a second time, chanting, “By the youth who is the God, I cast the circle.” Go around a third time, chanting, “By the old one who is the God, I cast the circle.” Place the bowl on

your altar and say, “The circle is cast and I am between worlds. Blessed Be.”

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Flying Ones, the Ones Who Flee and the Ones Who Fly in the Face of Danger, guard my circle and bring your wise counsel to my circle. Magical Airy Creatures, Sylphs of the Dawn, join my circle and bring the playful joy of stories well told. Hail and welcome!”

Summon the South:

“Burning Ones, the Ones Who Fight with Passion and Will, the Ones Who Love without Care for the Consequences, guard my circle and bring the wisdom of passion to my circle. Creatures of Fire, Salamanders of the Noonday, join my circle and bring the wisdom of stories well learned. Hail and welcome!”

Summon the West:

“Swimmers of the Magical Realms, the Ones Who Feel All Emotions without Judgment, guard my circle and bring your love to my circle. Magical Swimmers, Undines of Grace and Flexibility, join my circle and bring the heart of the story to my circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Diggers of the Dark, the Ones Who Dig into the Heart and Soul, guard my circle and bring the wisdom of the body and the melding of the soul to my circle. Creatures of the Rock and Soil, Gnomes, join my circle and bring the grit and dirt of all stories to my circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Cerridwen, Crone of the Cauldron, Creator of All Wisdom and Inspiration, join me in my circle. Bring to me the wisdom of all stories, the courage to tell them and the delight and joy of a story well told and well learned. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Taliesin, Teller of All Tales, Magical God of Our Soul Who Transforms the Doubt and Ugliness of Hard Lessons into the Beauty and Celebration of a Story Better than Gold, join my circle. Bring me the wisdom and beauty of living the story, and living to tell about it. Hail and welcome.”

Center and ground:

Take a deep breath and hold it. Let that breath out with a sigh, expelling as much air as you can. Take a second breath and hold it. Let that breath out with a huge noise, expelling all the distractions and frustrations in your life. Take a third breath and hold it. Let that breath out with a tone, expelling all the air in a beautiful note. As the last bit of air and music vibrate within you and you begin the normal breath of deep trance work, see yourself as a seed on the fertile ground. Feel your hull and your inside. Rest with that seed for a moment. Then, send a tiny tendril out, bursting easily from the hull to burrow eagerly into the ground. Send roots through the bedrock, into the deep center of the Mother Earth. Feel the loving embrace of the Mother as you find an anchor for your root. Anchor there and feel the energy of the Mother rise up through your roots, mingle with your own energy. Be filled with the energy of the Mother and feel your energy dance with hers. Move

your awareness up to the surface and send sprouts to the sky. Feel the warmth of the sun reach down to embrace you. Feel that sun energy mingle with your energy and with the energy of the Mother.

Those three energies—yours, the Earth's and the sun's—dance together with power and strength. Take a deep breath and come back to the circle, grounded and centered in the love of the Mother, the strength of your being and the embrace of the sun.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

"I am a storyteller. My stories come from my life, lived in joy and sorrow. I know my stories, and I tell them. I do not have to be the story because I tell the story. The story does not tell me. Blessed Be."

Meditation:

Take three deep breaths, centering the last one on a single tone. "Om. Om." Close your eyes and take three more deep breaths. In your mind's eye, you are standing before a wide graveled path. You start to walk on that path as it inclines slightly upward.

Upward you walk, enjoying the sunshine and the birds chirping. You see all manner of wonders and they entertain you and bring you many emotions. Eventually, you see before you the most beautiful building. Notice the style and structure. It appeals to you like no other. Notice that the door is open for you. Go up to the building and in through the door. There is one room in the building and it is filled with all kinds of books and recordings. Big leather-bound books. Tiny little books. Cassette tapes in cases. Everything is well used and lovingly cared for. You know that whoever uses these books loves them and reads them often.

Spend some time looking, touching. Sit with a book or a recording. Read and listen....

After a while, you will notice a man in the room. He looks magical and he is very glad to see you. Ask him to tell you the story you need to hear most. He tells it to you. Listen....

When he is finished, he asks you to tell the story that is in your heart, for he loves stories. Use all your courage and tell him that story. He then speaks words of wisdom. Listen....

When it is time, he thanks you, for the greatest gift is your story and the dream that goes with it. He gives you a gift and bids you good-bye, with the wish that your story manifests your dreams. Thank him and turn, knowing that this place is in your heart and you can always come back. Walk out the door and down the path. See the wonders that you saw before and know that they are your stories to tell. Come back to yourself to tell them. When you are ready, take a deep breath and come back to your circle.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Take some time to tell your story to the assembled spirits. Stand up and move your body around and dance your story—however the movement takes you. In dancing the story, it becomes part of your blood and bones. When you are ready, chant and dance and move the energy upward.

“By my blood and by my bones,
I tell the story of my soul.
I tell the story of my heart.
I tell the story of my life.
By my breath and by my song,
I tell my story loud and long.

OOOOooooo. OOOOooooo. OOOOh.”

Whooooosh!

Cakes and Ale:

Raise your cup and say, “Thanks to all who hear and all who know. May this nourish me and pleasure me as I tell the tale.” Raise your plate/food and say, “Thanks to all who hear and all who know. May this nourish me and pleasure me as I tell the tale. Blessed be.”

Center and Ground:

Take three breaths, as you did before, expelling the last in a single tone. Cast your awareness back to that plant. Send your awareness down your roots to your anchor and gently disconnect yourself from that anchor, knowing that you can always go back to the Mother. Pull your roots gently through the bedrock until you are back in yourself. Cast your awareness to your leafy arms and gently disconnect from the embrace of the sun, knowing that the embrace is yours always. Pull your leaves back inside. Keep the energy that you need and touch the earth to send out the excess. When you are ready, take a deep breath and open your eyes, ready to take your leave of the circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Taliesin, Bright of Brow and Light of Heart, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Thank You for the joy of the story and the magic of telling it. Thank You for the dark presence of lessons learned and shared, and the delight of the beauty of my story. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Cerridwen, Goddess of Inspiration and the Blessing of Knowledge, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Thank You for the breath of inspiration and the magic of knowing. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:***Farewell to the North:***

“Guardians of the Dark and the Burrowing Gnomes of the North, thank you for the bones and blood of my story. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians of the Dark Deep Waters and the Swimming Undines of the West, thank you for the heart and soul of my story. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Guardians of the Dark Passion and the Burning Salamanders of the South, thank you for the passion and will of my story. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians of the Light and Dark mind and the Flying Sylphs of the East, thank you for the wisdom and intelligence of my story. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Carrying the bowl, go widdershins around the circle. First say, “By the age of the sage, I open the circle.” Secondly say, “By the passion of the youth, I open the circle.” Thirdly say, “By the innocence of the babe that is the God, I open the circle.” Hold your bowl up to the sun and say, “By all that is Dark and Wise, the circle is open but unbroken. Blessed Be.”

MASTERING THE SELF

THE GOD IN ARIES

The steps we take in understanding the Sacred Masculine are firmer, more confident, as we enter Aries. Spring is already here or just around the corner. With every fiber of our being, we are sure that spring is here. Even if snow storms threaten, we know they will soon be gone. The light and the warmth are inexorable now. The darkness is waning. The light overtakes all.

The step of the God is firm, confident, and strong. He approaches the fullness of His manhood with all the (over)confidence of youth. He is athletic and exhibits His prowess. He does not know failure. He is invincible. The blessings of good health, intelligence and youth show in His every step. He walks, runs, jumps, and tumbles without fear of injury or a thought about long-term effects of his actions. His joyful confidence matches that of spring. He is exhilarated, and exhilarating to be around. We are all caught in the allure of His youth and His beauty. We are inspired, bewitched and seduced by His joy. We gain confidence from His presence and the older ones are overtaken by nostalgia and envy.

This confidence gives the God a certain arrogance, as well. He cannot imagine being wrong, old, or injured. He is careless with His body, His feelings and His soul. Confident that everyone will forgive Him, He is careless of others. Luckily, the Universe is a safe place that gives measured amounts of protection and care to foolish youths. Not always, but most of the time.

It is no mistake that the sign of Aries is ruled by the planet Mars named for the Roman God of war. In earlier times, Mars was an Earth God; specifically of spring, Nature and fertility. He protected domestic animals. And as an Earth God, He was also a Death God and that is probably how He evolved into a war God. He was the father of the two founders of Rome, the warring brothers Romulus and Remus. Mars often went into battle with His companions, Fuga and Timor, flight and fear.

In Aries, we explore the warrior spirit and the concurrent development of self-awareness. In our society, self-awareness has a touchy-feely aspect to it that is completely unlike the view of the warrior. Often, young men join the military to get away from the tyranny of their parents. But in escaping parental authority, many young men merely substitute one authority for another. Sometimes though, young men and women truly find themselves. The discipline of the military gives them a sense of self and an understanding of where they fit in the Universe. This sense often follows them into larger society.

In the pagan world, the warrior is an individual who is not dependent on an established military, government, religion or family structure for his own identity. He stands in his own power. He is confident in his abilities and his expertise. He knows his strengths and

faults. A warrior can demand respect and beg for forgiveness with equal dignity. He is aware of himself and others. He knows, and in knowing, he is able to live life with joy and compassion.

Self-mastery gives the pagan warrior his spirit. Unlike Mars, he does not need fear as his constant companion. He rules his own passions with wisdom, discernment, and compassion. This wisdom comes from within and is not dependent on the number of years he has lived, or on how much he has studied or trained. The source of his wisdom comes from his connection to himself as divine and his connection to the Divine. Wisdom knows, “I am God, I am Goddess.”

The ritual that follows helps us understand our warrior selves. We learn to not battle with ourselves and others. We learn the wisdom to use our strongest energies to assert our own boldness as God.

I AM GOD

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN ARIES

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about what it means to say, “I am God.” How does it make you feel? Examine your “shoulds” and then cast them aside. How do you want to feel? Think about the times you have stood fully in your power. What was that like? How often has it happened? What were the circumstances? Do

you want to be that powerful all the time? Why, or why not? What do you want to change? How can you create those changes?

Cast the circle:

From the center of your circle, visualize a bright light around your space. Shape it with your mind and make sure it is clear, round and beautiful. Say, “The circle is cast and I am between the worlds. Blessed Be.”

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Guardians of the East, Guardians of the Vision, join me in my sacred circle. Sylphs, flying on the breezes of clarity, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Guardians of the South, Guardians of Sensuality and Will, join me in my sacred circle. Salamanders, Creatures of the Flame and Fire, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Guardians of the West, Guardians of the Heart and Emotion, join me in my sacred circle. Undines, Creatures of Water and Ocean, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Guardians of the North, Guardians of the Soul and the Dark, join me in my sacred circle. Gnomes, Creatures of the Dirt and Rock, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Wise Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom and War, join my sacred circle and bring wisdom and balance. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Powerful Mars, God of the Spring, of Natural Death and War, Protector and Warrior, join my sacred circle. Bring springtime and Earth to my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a breath and hold it. Close your eyes and then expel the breath in a sigh. Take a second breath and then expel it with a sound. Take a third breath and hold it. Expel the breath with a sigh that centers you. You become aware of yourself and you are a long staff made of wood, held in the hand of the God. The God places your staff-self firmly in the sand and walks away. You cast your awareness up and down yourself, and in that movement of energy, you are transformed from a crafted tool to a living tree. Joyfully, you send your roots downward into the soil. Deep you go into the heart of the Mother, as She embraces you there. Your energies meld and merge in joy. You are anchored in the love of the Mother. Pulling your awareness up through the roots, you send your branches up into the Sky and the Universe reaches down and embraces you. You meld with the Sky God and together the three of you dance the grounded energy. Come back to the circle. Open your eyes and find yourself ready and grounded. Blessed Be.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

I am God.

Meditation:

Take a deep breath and hold it. Close your eyes. Expel your breath. Breathe the deep breath of connection. You are standing on a battlefield in full armor. You smell Death and terror all around you. You turn and walk away from the stench. You journey forward and away, having learned all there is to learn. After a while, you become weary and reach a river. Because you no longer need them, you remove your armor and lay down any weapons you might be carrying. Some of these weapons may be symbolic of your daily fight to maintain yourself. Lay them down and then walk away.

As you do, you find a pretty pond filled with exotic colorful fishes. The pond, you realize is surrounded by fertile soil and growing plants. Notice the plants and what they are. They mean something to you....

You realize someone is there, among the plants around the pond. It is the God, Mars, in His full armor. Under your gaze, He removes His armor and casts aside His weapons. He stands before you, powerful. He reaches down and starts working on the plants. Under His touch, they grow even faster—more fertile than ever before. He beckons you to help, and you learn much from the work with the plants....

When He is done with His chores, He sits down and beckons you to sit beside Him. He hands you a refreshing cup of water. You drink, and it is the most delicious drink you have ever tasted. It nourishes you, and quenches your thirst. When you are refreshed, the God turns to look deep into your eyes. You look deeply back. Your gazes meet, meld and combine. You and

He meld together in wisdom and power. Your hearts beat together as You Both learn the wisdom of the other....

When it is time, you drop your gaze and the two of You are separate in body only. You realize there is a connection between You that remains. You have learned and He has learned. He looks at you, places His hands on your shoulders and says, “You are God and I worship You.” He disappears....

When you are ready, take a deep breath, expel it, and then open your eyes. You are back in your sacred circle. Blessed Be.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Take some time to write down what you have learned. Stand up and jump and dance around the circle. Say and chant, “I am God” getting faster and louder. Turn the word God into a long tone—*G-abbbbbbbbbbb-d*—until the power moves out into the Universe with a huge *whoosh*. Blessed Be.

Cakes and Ale:

Take the food and drink, and offer it to the four directions and to the God and Goddess. “Bless this food and drink; may it work for my body and spirit. May joy and laughter follow me from this circle. So mote it be.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath, breathing in the power of the Divine. Expel the breath with the satisfaction of a life well lived. You are the tree formed from the staff. Send your awareness up and down yourself and feel the connections between the Mother and the Sky. Gently detach yourself from the Mother, knowing that you can

always connect. Gently detach yourself from the Sky, knowing that you can always connect. Take a deep breath of power and compassion and open your eyes, grounded in the love of the Earth and the Sky. Blessed Be.

Farewell to the God:

“Mars, Powerful Guardian of the Spring, thank You for the wisdom of being God. Thank You for the wisdom of Life armored, and Life without armor. Thank You for Your protection and counsel. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Wise Minerva, Guardian of the Healers, thank You for the wisdom of balance. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:

Farewell to the North:

“Guardians of the North, Gnomes of the Mountains, thank you for the wisdom of the dark burrows. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians of the West, Undines of the Streams, thank you for the wisdom of the waters of the world. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Guardians of the South, Salamanders of the Fire, thank you for the spark of wise fire. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians of the East, Sylphs of the Storms and Breezes, thank you for the wisdom of the air. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

See the circle you cast with your vision. Watch the colors fade and disappear. When they are gone, say, “The circle is open but unbroken. So mote it be.”

GROWING THE GARDEN

THE GOD IN TAURUS

As we start out on the dirt path of Taurus, we return to the Earth. We step firmly onto the earth so integral to this sign. As our confidence grows we are sometimes called bull-headed.

Spring has finally come. The world is again full of birds, baby animals and green grass. The entire world is prepares for the creation and re-creation of Life. The snow has melted, flooding the lowlands and spilling over the creek banks. Green grass replaces the mud and the first flower sprouts are poking their way up through the soil. At last! The world is fecund. We feel the growing as the world wakes, embraces the sun and soaks up the moisture from melting snow. We feel the wakening and the quickening.

The God is alive, awake and ready for love! He is fully sexual with the prowess of a young man in the full strength of his fertility. This is the time of May Day, of Beltane, the Celtic festival of fertility and celebration. Sensible behavior is abandoned in the wild dance of joy of the season. It is love without care, sex without worry.

In many societies, the May holiday's sexual play is a symbolic sowing of the seed and plowing of the fields. The God is the man for the job! He is the fertile source of the seed and of life. He has the vigor to plant the seed, fertilize the ground and till the soil. He is the tender of the land.

He is the farmer who plants the seed and plows the field, the symbolic body of the Goddess. Farming is a hard job—a tremendous amount of work with many commercial factors, such as the costs of fertilizer, seed and supplies. The job begins with great hope and faith at the beginning of the season. The faith is in Nature's fertility and hope for harmony, for abundance. The farmer hopes he can work in harmony with Nature each day.

We look to Taurus for stability and resourcefulness. The earth sign of the bull tells us that we are deeply grounded in ourselves. Some say, stubborn and bull-headed. Just put your head down and charge full blast toward your destination. But Taurus also gives us a sense of deep connection with the Earth, to the rhythms of living in harmony with the Earth. We feel that we learn to grow plants and animals and ourselves at the same time. In the joyful abandon of May Day, we fertilize ourselves in our great exploration of the world. Growing and nurturing ourselves, we align with the harmonies of the Universe. In this groundedness, we find a stable anchor that keeps us steady when storms come. Those storms may rock and unsettle us, but we know they will not destroy us. Deep down in that stable anchor of the Earth's energy, we find comfort.

Farmers husband both the fertility of the land and the fertility of the animals in their care. They are much concerned with the union of Male and Female

that creates newness. Agrarian societies placed significant importance on fertility festivals because they celebrated not only life and desire, but also ensured the continuation of family and community.

One of the original creator Gods of the old ways was Lono, Hawaiian God of Agriculture. He was the God of Peace and Prosperity, of Harvest and Song. He was the God of Weather and Controlled Thunder, Lightning and Rain. He slid down a rainbow to marry the maiden, Laka, who revealed Herself as the Goddess of Plenty and of the Dance. She is the patroness of the Hula. Together, Lono and Laka bring great bounty and happiness to the people of the land. From them, we find that farming and gardening is joyous work, full of the glory of abundance.

The Victorian explorers and settlers of Hawaii were shocked by the openness of their society. Judging the Hawaiians by their own corseted morality, the settlers were appalled by the grass skirts, bare breasts and the misunderstood sexual behavior. They were unable to understand that the Hawaiians were tuned to their lush and productive land by celebrating the joy of the sun, water and sand.

The meditation in the following ritual has two parts. The first part is *The Dance*. It is about celebrating fertility and union with the Goddess. The second part is called *The Song*. It is about farming and being in union with all that grows. The meditation taps into the deva energy, the spirit within each plant. You may divide the ritual, doing each meditation separately, or you may do them together. If you do both in one ritual, they illustrate the energy's flow from excitement through exuberance and into the attentive care of nurturing. Doing the meditations separately highlights the power and strength

of each process. In the first, you experience the love-making of the God. You will be in each role, the receiver and the giver, regardless of your gender. Change the wording to make yourself comfortable with the experience. Do not let sexual roles or orientations derail the experience.

Sometimes my job as priestess is to push the celebrant into new experiences that they have not considered. It is always your option to change things or to forgo meditations that make you uncomfortable. As the one who knows your best, it is your job to decide how far you push each new experience. I hope that you will open yourself to the experience and embrace the ecstasy.

GROWING THE GARDEN

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN TAURUS

Creating Sacred Space:

This ritual and meditation has two parts. For the first part, *The Dance*, spend some time thinking about your sexual history and your attitudes towards sex. How has your attitude changed over time, and how have these changes influenced how you feel about pagan celebrations of love and sensuality? How has your sexual history and your attitudes toward sex helped or inhibited your enjoyment of sex and your experience of sensuality?

For the second part, *The Song*, spend some time thinking about how you have grown. There is a line from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where one of the slaves with no history says, (paraphrased), "I'm Topsy and I just grewed." The saying has evolved to be, "Grown like Topsy." Did you just grow, or were you raised and nurtured? Are you cultivated, or are you a weed? And what is a weed, anyway? Think about it. What does it mean to be cultivated or to be a weed? What are the values, strengths and weaknesses? Is your spiritual life planted and cultivated, or has it grown like a weed? Neither is better than the other.

Cast the Circle:

If your space allows it—if not, carry a bowl of soil from a place to you—cast the circle by spreading soil from a place sacred to you around the circle as you chant, "Casting the soil of my soul, round about the circle I go."

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals:

Summon the East:

"Guardians of the Sunrise and the Dawn, those who start our day in anticipation and joy, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of the nurturing sun and the gentle breezes of the new day. Creatures of the Air, Magical Sylphs and Bright Singing Birds, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the sweet sound of spring and summer. Hail and welcome!"

Summon the South:

"Guardians of the Hot Noon Sun and the Heat of Passion and Growth, those who compel us and bespell

us to reach for the sky, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the blessings of hot anticipation and desire. Salamanders, Creatures of the Fire, and the fire itself that clears the land and makes it ready, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome!”

Summon the West:

“Guardians of the Sunset and the Evening, those who end our day with a sense of accomplishment and joy, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of the day fulfilled. Creatures of the Water and the Falling Rain, Undines, join me in my sacred circle and bring the blessings of a thirst quenched. Hail and welcome!”

Summon the North:

“Guardians of Midnight and the Dark, those who heal and nurture through rest, join me in my sacred circle. Gnomes, Creatures of the Deep and the Earth, join us and bring the blessings of the basic beauty of the soil. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Greetings Laka, Goddess of Plenty and of the Hula. Dance and sway and bring the poetry of planting and harvest to my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of bounty and of growth. Hail and welcome!”

Summon the God:

“Greetings Lono, Great God of Song and of Agriculture. Sing to me of the beauty of the planting of the seed. Sing to me the passion of moving through the soil to greet the sun. Sing to me of the steady power of growing in the sun. Sing to me the sacrifice of harvest. Sing to me the gift of nurturing food. Join me in my sacred circle with a gift and a song. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath that centers you. Take another and another until you are breathing in a rhythm that is calming and restful. See yourself become a rock sitting in a huge field. Feel the sun beat down on the rock solidness of your back. Breathe into being the rock. Feel the rock, as it sits on the Earth. Feel how far the rock extends downward into the soil, immovable and perfect. Feel that centeredness. Feel the energy of the Mother Earth merge with you and fill you. You are a rock filled with the commingled energy of the Earth and of you. Feel that energy dance together. Feel again the heat of the Sun, and feel it absorbed into the rock. Feel the energy of the Sun merge with your commingled energies and dance together the dance of the sun, the Earth and you.

When you are ready, come back to the circle grounded in the love of the Mother and of the Universe.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

I am God, and I love and grow. I dance in love and sing in love.

Meditations:***The Dance:***

Settle yourself comfortably. Close your eyes and take three centering breaths. As you continue to breathe deeply, feel your breath fill your whole body with warmth. This warmth fills your whole body. Fills and relaxes you. As you continue to breathe deeply, you are very relaxed. You find yourself outside on a beautiful spring day. It is warm and delightful. The birds are singing and it is peaceful. You are lying in a lovely secluded grove. You are shaded by trees and bushes. It is

the most comfortable and relaxed that you have ever been. You are skylad. You stretch luxuriously, feeling the flexibility and strength of your body. You see before you your Lover God, full of strength and vigor. He smiles at you and embraces you. His embrace envelops you, and you feel His passion. You open and receive Him and the two of you move together in harmony....

When you have received all that you desire, you turn to Him and see that He is still full of need. You move to Him and envelop Him in your embrace. He opens himself to you and receives you. You give to Him all that He needs, and the two of you move together in harmony....

The two of you lie together, relaxed and happy. You speak words as necessary, and then you sleep gently in each other's arms....

You awaken and He is gone, though His love lingers with you. You breathe three times and open your arms, back in your sacred circle.

The Song:

Settle yourself comfortably. Close your eyes and take three centering breaths. You are standing in the dark of night. It is very deep and dark and you are at peace and at rest. Slowly you hear the notes of a song begin. As the light grows and dawn begins, the song continues. It speaks to your heart and soul. You know the tune and feel the rhythm in your bones and in your whole being. Slowly, as the light grows, you begin to see that you are in the midst of a plowed and cultivated, carefully tended garden. Notice how everything grows straight and tall and well-nurtured by light, rain and the God who tends it.

You see the God tending the garden, going about His business of hoeing, watering and spreading fertilizer.

You smell the wonderful smell of freshly turned earth and growing plants. You feel the heat of the sun and you hear the beautiful song of the God as He goes about nurturing the plant creatures in His care....

You see the spirits of the plant creatures, the devas, dance in response to the song of the God. You feel the beauty of All That Is in this single garden. The devas turn and see you and dance around you in the rhythm of the song. You sway with the dance and in that dance you feel the God greet you. As the devas dance around you, you begin to sing the song of the God and you are the God. The God Lono dances inside you and is you. You feel the power of His fertility. You feel His ability to plant seed and to nurture things to growth. You feel, as you sing and dance, the beauty of tending the Earth with physical labor and with love. You and the God, as one, bring the garden to harvest....

You feel the sacrifice of the devas, as they fulfill their purpose. You feel the sorrow of the God. You feel the pride of the devas, as they make their sacrifice, and you feel the profound honor that the God gives them. Bounty becomes deeper and more significant as you know that the bounty you are and the bounty you receive is the gift of sacrifice lovingly given in honor and in pride. The song takes on richness that is almost inexpressible....

You hear the voice of the God tell you the story of the garden of your life and the bounty that is you. Listen well.

When it is time, the song takes on its final phase as the sun sinks into the west. The God takes His leave of you with a final embrace and final words. Listen....

It is dark and you are back in the here-and-now. Take a deep breath and then open your eyes. You are back in your sacred circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

Move around your circle, chanting or singing the song you heard. If you cannot remember it (it really is still there, in your body), use a single tone. Move the tone faster, quicker, as the cone moves up, into the Universe. With a final whoosh, feel the cone of power move into the Universe to nurture you who grow the garden of your soul.

Cakes and Ale:

“With this drink, I nurture my body so that I will always be growing and changing. With this food, I honor the devas who gave it to me. I thank all that went into this food and drink for its aid in growing my soul. Blessed Be!”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep, centering breath and find yourself back in the field as the rock. Take a moment and feel the energy swirling inside you—of you, the Earth and the Sun. Feel the joy of that dance. Gently remove the embrace of the Mother, knowing the embrace is in every step you take. Gently remove the embrace of the Sun, knowing it is there in every breath you breathe. Take a deep breath and come back to your circle, whole and grounded.

Farewell to the God:

“Lono, Great God of the Island and the Land, thank You for the blessings. Thank You for the song that helps me to sing the joy of the garden. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Laka, Dear Goddess of the Hula, thank You for the bounty You brought to my circle. Thank You for the dance of the garden, and thank You for your presence. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:***Farewell to the North:***

“Guardians and Creatures of Midnight and of the Soul that Nurtures me, thank you for the blessings of the soil and for the peace of night. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians and Creatures of the Water that Keeps Us Well, thank you for the blessings of the rain. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Guardians and Creatures of the Day, thank you for the blessings of heat and passionate growth. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians and Creatures of the Dawn and of New Joy, thank you for the blessings of the day. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Go widdershins around the circle with your bowl of soil, or sweeping the soil you have cast down. The circle is open but unbroken. Blessed Be!

TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE GOD IN GEMINI

We breeze into Gemini, the air sign that gives us the confidence of our beliefs and the ability to talk about them. Confidence and the ability to defend his thoughts verbally are hallmarks of the Sacred Male, though sometimes men are called blow-hards or know-it-alls.

Gemini is also the sign of twins. This gives us the ability to look at both sides of a coin. Gemini is a time of teaching and learning.

In the life of the God, we move toward adulthood and toward greater accomplishment and learning. The God has learned much about life and much about love. He begins to teach. With the confidence of youth, He knows it all. And with the insecurity of youth, He doubts it all. He is excited about everything He knows: the breadth and the depth of His knowledge. With the excitement of youth, He wants to communicate it all to anyone who will listen. He teaches, finding that in teaching, He is learning more than He ever thought possible. He especially learns that the breadth and depth of His ignorance is phenomenal. The teacher usually

learns more than the students. This is a humbling experience, moving Him away from being a big bag of wind, a blow-hard, into a caring, effective and beloved teacher.

Air signs are concerned with the intellect and with knowledge. Because teaching is a love-hate thing, Gemini is the sign of a teacher. We love it and we hate it. We love our success and we are frustrated by our failures.

The college where I work as a librarian is a teacher preparation college. We are dedicated to preparing teachers to teach the children of our country and the world. It is an important job. Because a teacher's pay is low, it is a profession of the heart.

My colleagues and I often discuss good teaching and what helps the learner most? Learning takes place when the learner's attention is engaged. Engagement occurs in the brain (intellect) and in activities (body speaking to the brain). When a lesson is learned, new brain pathways are created and the person is transformed. Learning is a sacred activity that uses the connections of body, mind and spirit. Teaching becomes a sacred trust, for it is the teacher who provides the situation where learning takes place. Teachers cannot *make* the student learn, but they can provide the environment and the materials. Sometimes the learner finds his or her passion and a lifetime of exploration.

Remember your best learning. What were the circumstances? Was learning something you did because you loved it? Was an activity involved that made your body speak to your mind and your memory? Think of your worst learning situations. What made them so awful? Was it the subject matter? The method of presentation? Was it your reaction to the

materials? Considering this will help you be a better teacher and a better learner.

We are always learning, even into old age. When we stop learning, we really stop living—even if our body goes on and on. At its very best, teaching is an inspiring, joyful experience that awakens our passions and our creative abilities. Teaching leads us to wisdom. It is not the teacher who leads, but the student.

In mythology, the best and wisest teachers were the centaurs. Like the sign of Gemini, these creatures of half man and half horse have dual personalities. The sons of centaurs, who were the sons of Apollo, were both wise and bestial. Centaurs have huge appetites and became uncontrollable when under the influence of fermented anything. In this condition, they carouse and pick fights and are prone to violence and rage. Few centaurs can control their more bestial impulses and function in a civilized society.

One of the wisest and most prominent centaurs was Chiron, famous for his wisdom and ability to teach. He tutored the great Greek heroes Jason, Achilles and Hercules. Through music, knowledge of medicine and great hunting skills, Chiron channeled his more boorish traits into activities beneficial to others.

Teaching and learning can excite our passions. They make us who we are. Once we start, we never finish. (If we stop, then we die. Maybe not in body, but deep in our souls.)

The following ritual allows us to become the student and learn about the greatest subject of all: our divine souls.

THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENT

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN GEMINI

Creating Sacred Space:

Take some time to think of yourself as a student. What was your best learning experience? What happened, and how did you feel? Can you make that happen for yourself again? And again and again? What is the magic of learning, and how can you keep yourself learning? Think about the best teacher(s) you have ever had. Did you count yourself among them? What was it that made learning from these teachers so wonderful? In what unexpected places have you found a teacher? Sometimes our best teacher is someone we hate, and at other times it is someone we love, but it is always someone who has challenged us.

Cast the Circle:

Using a book or some other learning tool, walk deosil around the circle three times. As you create sacred space, see the circle before you, envisioning it as the wisdom of the book creating a circle of light around your sacred space.

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals:***Summon the East:***

“Guardians of the Eastern Realms, the castles of learning and intellect, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of lessons to be learned and the joy of newly discovered knowledge. Sylphs, Creatures of the Airy Realms, bring the openness of mind and join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Guardians of the Southern Shores, the land of imagination and creation, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of creativity and the will to create. Salamanders, Creatures of the Fire to Create, join me in my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Guardians of the Western Oceans, the deep emotion that understands newness, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the depth of belief and the blessings of doing and loving the doing. Undines, Creatures of the Waves, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of change and understanding. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Guardians of the Northern Realms with the Deepness of the Dark, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of soul knowing and of peace. Gnomes, Builders of the Earth, join me in my sacred circle and bring the blessing of discovery. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Great Athena, Goddess of Knowledge and Companion to the Owl, join me in my sacred circle and bring

the wisdom of knowledge. Bring the knowledge of the mind, of the body, of the emotions and of the soul. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Mighty Chiron, powerful of body and of mind, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of a disciplined mind, a powerful understanding the spirit and the power of teaching. Bring the power of a dual nature, both wild and tamed, to this sacred place. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take one centering breath, exhaling with a sigh. Take a second centering breath and then close your eyes as you exhale. Take a third breath and then exhale with a tone. As you continue to breathe deeply, you are standing on a wide sunlit plain in the middle of the Wind. The Wind is powerful and strong. As you stand there, it works its magic. The Winds swirl around you. Feel the Wind move through you and work with your own beautiful energy. See the energy that is you mingle with the energy of the Wind. You are in the embrace of the universal breath. Cast your awareness down to your feet and feel roots growing from your feet, deep into the Earth. Anchor your roots on a place that is firm, and then pull the energy of the Earth up into yourself. Feel the warmth and the love of the Mother fill you and dance with the energy of the breath. Feel the energies move around you and through you as the three energies dance as one. Take a deep breath and open your eyes.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

I am both teacher and student. I am learning every moment, and I am teaching every day. I am who I am,

and I teach others by being. I am who I am, and I learn by being.

Meditation:

Take three centering breaths. Take deep breaths and keep breathing in a calm peaceful way. You are standing in the middle of a field and feel the sun warm you throughout. It is the sun of young springtime and you feel the excitement of new growth and new things. As you stand there, you glory in all the feelings of newness and joy. A beautiful cloud descends from the glorious sky and envelops you in its embrace. The cloud lifts you up and up and up. You are carried in its peaceful fluffiness. Relax into the embrace of the cloud. As you move gently forward to your destination, take in all the sights.

Eventually, the cloud hovers over an open glade. In the middle of the glade is a sacred circle with comfortable benches, a circle fire and a stream trickling nearby. The breeze gently sways the trees surrounding the glade. The earth smells richly pungent and you are deposited in the eastward side of the circle.

Approaching the circle is the Teacher, the Great Chiron. He is huge and powerful. You could be afraid, but you are not. He speaks to you and His voice fills your head and your heart. You answer, and the conversation has begun. He tells you what you need to know about being a student. You ask what you need to know to be the best student possible. He answers....

He tells you what you need to know about being a teacher. You ask what you need to know to be the best teacher possible. He answers....

You ask Him questions and then tell Him a story. That is the greatest gift He can get: a story from your heart....

When you are done, you share cakes and ale to remember all that is needed. He gives you a symbol of your life as student and a symbol of your life as teacher. And in the flicker of an instant, He is gone.

You move outside the circle, knowing that you can always come back to this place for guidance and care. The cloud envelopes you in its fluffy embrace and you are off through the air. You return back to your field, strong and renewed. Take a few deep breaths and open your eyes. You are back in your sacred circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

Take a word from your conversation with Chiron and use it in a chant. Move your body in place, or move deosil around your circle, as you chant your word. Get louder and faster as the energy moves up and up into the Universe. You will feel the *whoosh* of power as the energy moves out into the Universe to work its magic on you as teacher and as student.

Cakes and Ale:

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for what you have learned and what this has taught you. Bless the drink so that you never know thirst, and bless the food so that it nurtures your body.

Center and Ground:

You are back in the sunlit plain filled with the love of the Mother and the breath of the Universe. As you breathe in the joy and love, you feel that energy dance inside you. Cast your awareness down your roots to the place where you are anchored. Gently disconnect that anchor, knowing that you are always connected to the Mother in every step, and bring your roots back into

yourself. Feel the breath of that Wind that filled you and gently ask that Wind to leave you, knowing that you can experience the joy with every breath. Feel the Wind leave you. Take a deep breath and feel your energy fill you, full of light and love. Take another deep breath and open your eyes. You are back in your sacred circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Big, Strong, Powerful Chiron, thank You for Your wisdom and the gentleness of Your teaching. Thank You for the blessings of the student and the teacher. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Wise Athena, thank You for Your teaching and for the wisdom of the owl. Thank You for the blessings of the student and the teacher. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:

Farewell to the North:

“Guardians and Creatures of the Eastern Realms, thank you for the wisdom of the intellect. Thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians and Creatures of the Western Shores, thank you for wisdom of emotion and the blessings of learning. Thank your for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Farewell to the South:

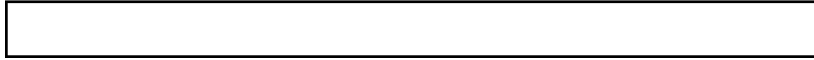
“Guardians of the Southern Shores, thank you for the wisdom of creativity and the will to create. Thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians of the Eastern Realms, thank you for the intellect and the wisdom to use it well. Thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and Farewell!”

Open the Circle:

Using the same symbol, move widdershins around the circle, three times. The circle is open but unbroken. Blessed be!



FATHERING

THE GOD IN CANCER

We dive into the world of the Sacred Masculine and into the water sign of Cancer. It is full summer now. All the planting, tending and fertilizing of the spring has given way to riotous growth. The sun rises full in the sky and we are feeling the heat. Sometimes the heat invigorates us and sometimes it makes us laze in the shade and wait for night. We begin to know that there will be an end to these days, but we do not have to worry about it yet. Fall is still far away. So we work hard and play hard. It is time for a picnic; it is a time to mature.

The God is now grown up. He begins to feel the responsibilities of adulthood, and He carries them lightly. While He explores new roles, there is an exuberant joyfulness in Him. The Goddess that He met and dallied with during the maypole dance is great with child. He is experiencing the pride of His ability to co-create new life. He begins to understand that He needs to build a home and a future. A family is being born along with the child. The God seeks to create the necessary security for His newborn and His young family. He is a father and is learning to father another being.

In our society, fathers are often difficult, confusing, absent, loving or mean. Patriarchy seems to give men all the privileges, but this status carries a high price. Very mixed messages are sent about fatherhood and fathering. At this time of year, we see advertisements in the media for products deemed appropriate for fathers, to help celebrate of Father's day. Throughout my childhood, we had Ward Cleaver and the other television fathers who knew best, if your best was an orderly house in the suburbs with a neat garage and lawn. The truth is that Life is messy, and families are hard to contain in a tidy garage. Families experiment, spill and make messes. Men in patriarchy are expected to be wise, successful and right. Fathers are supposed to be nurturing disciplinarians, successful in business and wise in parenting. It is very difficult to attain and maintain these standards. Men's failures are judged as harshly as women's failures. It does not matter who has the privilege.

Summer's riotous growth spills over into the home life, as well. As every child grows to be fully who they are, fathers can only cope. The confusion of societal messages, realistic and unrealistic expectations, and the actual reality of Life being lived every minute sometimes overwhelm love and wisdom. Sometimes a father's wisdom is realized only at the end of a long life. The truth is that we all do the best we can, and we can only be who we are at that moment.

We can father ourselves because we are God. What does that mean? The father taps into the power of the Masculine. The wisdom of the Masculine knows Life has no limits and strength has no boundaries. Yet at the same time, the Masculine acknowledges and respects others' needs and emotions.

The true strength of the father is that he loves when loving is hopeless and he loves when loving is needed.

The father lets go and guides, nurtures and disciplines and protects, and he lets risks happen. It is not easy to father, but it has a deep power and wisdom rooted in love and the expansiveness of the Universe.

I searched books and the Internet to find a God of Fatherhood. Guess what! I could not find one that was not mixed with violence or other negative behavior. When the pantheons were being thought out, fatherhood was left out of the mix. Perhaps I was looking for the perfect example. All the Father God stories have a lot of messages about the use of force and power. The care of the family seems to have been left to the Goddess. Then I did think of Jehovah, the Father who sacrificed His Son for the world. After having been a Christian for many years, I cannot help but feel that there is a missing aspect to Jehovah. The jealous and vengeful God that reaches out to us from the pulpit cannot be the real God. Jehovah has many names and many aspects. In *The Best Guide to Meditation* by Victor N. Davich, the author tells us that there are twenty-five good and holy names for God. Among these names are: *Abicha*, which means “Our Father,” *Shalom*, which means “Peace,” *Chaim*, which means “Life,” and *Ahavah*, which means “Love.”

These names show that God is the Father, encompassing love, peace, life, and might. My intuitive sense of the God as Father is one of infinite patience and wisdom. Standing in the background, He is loving and nurturing.

Ancient Romans had *Pentares*, or household Gods. These Deities were chosen by the man of the house and were to keep watch over all the activities of the household. There was usually an altar to these *Pentares* inside the front door where visitors and family made offerings.

They were important to the family and to the household. So much so, that if the family moved, they took those Gods with them.

As an exercise for this chapter, identify a God to watch over you and your household. Ask for His loving attention and protection. Ask Him to be a part of your everyday life and part of the life of your household, all the people and critters. In that way, we re-establish the lost fatherhood of the God. And we father our own Godhood.

The meditation and ritual that follows means a lot to me. I grew up in a generation where fathers were busy working and earning a living. They did not have time for their children's activities. Involvement in those kinds of activities was not the norm, as it is today. I do have some standout memories of my father coming to activities for school and Girl Scouts. I have a sentimental fondness for baseball, though I was never on a team and never played any sports. This meditation delights me. In a way, the experiences in this meditation help me to create experiences for my soul that were not in my childhood.

FATHER'S DAY

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN CANCER

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time choosing a God to be the God of your household. Ask Him to serve as guardian and protector. Call on His nurturing qualities to help your

household to be filled with love and warmth. Build an altar to that God and make offerings to Him.

Think about what fatherhood means to you. Think about what it means to have no boundaries. Unbound and boundless. How does this affect the way you relate to others? Insert the name of the God into the ritual. Choose a Goddess that is a logical partner to your chosen God. I challenge you to pick one of the names of Jehovah and use Shekinah, the feminine face of God.

Cast the Circle:

Carrying a bowl of water, walk deosil around the circle. Say or chant, “By the heart of the God and Goddess, this circle is cast.”

Summon the Guardians and Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Children of the Eastern Realms, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of the mind and the freedom of knowledge. Creatures of the Air, Sylphs and Birds, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of wisdom. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Wise Ones of the South, Warriors and Amazons of the Will, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of the power to pull magic into the world. Salamanders, Creatures of the Fire, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the creative power of fire. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Wisdom keepers of the Western Shores, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the wisdom of the heart and the

transforming power of the senses. Creatures of the Whirlpools and the Waves, Undines, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the wisdom of the deepest secrets. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Dark Ones of the Mysterious North, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of the Earth. Creatures of the Mountains, Gnomes, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the wisdom of change through craft. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Wise and Loving God, Jehovah, join me in my sacred circle. Bring love and protection, the wisdom of love, and the love of a father. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Loving and Wise Goddess, Shekinah, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the love of partnership and the wisdom of family. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take three centering breaths. Keep breathing at a deep and peaceful rate. Close your eyes. See that you are next to a pond, still and beautiful. Cast your awareness up and down your body and realize that you are moss beside that lovely pond. Feel your roots reach into the warm, wet earth. The roots are dense and you are anchored beside the pond. Pull up the energy of the Mother Earth into your body and feel it mingle there inside you. Feel the dance of your energy and the energy of the Mother. You are beautiful. Feel the Sun warm the moss of your back. Feel the Sun’s energy

penetrate gently and fill your being. See the energy of the Sun dance with your energy and that of the Mother. See that beauty. Take a few more deep breaths and open your eyes. You are in your circle, rooted and grounded in the Mother and the Universe.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

Fathers are loving and beloved. They plant the seed of our being and, with the Mother, they nurture our growth and celebrate our accomplishments. I am father and I father myself.

Meditation:

Take a deep clearing breath and then another. Continue breathing deeply and peacefully. You are standing in the dark, facing the East. As dawn breaks, you greet the dawn and the day. The sun rises quickly and you now face the sun at noonday. It is summer. You are standing in the town baseball field. Kids are having fun. Their parents are watching, cheering them on. The air is filled with the joy of summer and the joy of family. You can smell summer foods cooking on grills and feel the general happiness of a lazy summer day. One of the fathers from the baseball game approaches you. He is wearing a baseball shirt and you see that He is the coach. You know that He is here to father you....

He takes you to the practice field and you play catch and bat balls around. He is filled with pride and praises you. He hugs you and encourages you. You take your place on the diamond, ready to play the game...

As He coaches you through the game, He tells you things you need to know about fathering. About being a father to children and being a father to yourself. He is taking care. After the game is over, He talks about

winning and losing and the game as a journey. He talks to you about the spiritual journey and the love of the game. Listen...

He then takes you to the picnic and you celebrate the summer....

When you are done eating and talking and laughing, it is time to leave. In your hand or your pocket is a Father's Day present. Give it to Him with love. He thanks you, and you slowly move away from the scene. The sun sets and you are in the dark. Take a deep breath. Smile, take another breath, and then remember that sometimes Life really is a picnic. Take a deep breath, open your eyes and come back to your sacred circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

Identify a word or tone that has significance for you from this journey. Say that word or tone over and over until you feel the power of the energy beginning to rise. Get louder and longer until you feel the power whoosh out into the Universe. Send it to heal the family and strengthen the fatherly part of you.

Cakes and Ale:

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for families in all their diversity. Thank the God and the Goddess for fathers. "Bless this drink so that it will wash me free of grief, and bless this food so that it will nourish me, body and soul. Blessed Be."

Center and Ground:

You are the moss beside the pond, still and silent. Feel the anchoring of your roots. Gently disconnect your roots and know that the love of the Earth is always

there. Gently disconnect your embrace with the Sun and know that the love of the Universe is there with every breath. Take a deep breath and you are back in human form. Take another breath and then open your eyes.

Farewell to the God:

“Loving God, Jehovah, perfect and knowing. Thank You for Your presence in my circle. Thank You for the blessings of fatherhood and thank You for being a father to me. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

Wise Goddess, Shekinah, loving and beautiful. Thank You for Your presence in my circle. Thank You for the blessings of power lovingly used. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:

Farewell to the North:

“Ancient Ones and Creatures of the Northern Realms, thank you for your presence in my ritual. Thank you for the blessings of the openness of love. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Swimming Ones and Creatures of the Water, thank you for your presence in my ritual. Thank you for the blessings of mature love and understanding of love. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Wise Ones and Creatures of Creation, thank you for your presence in my ritual. Thank you for the creative power of love. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Children and Creatures of the Eastern Realms, thank you for your presence in my ritual. Thank you for the blessings of a child’s heart and the joy of a childlike love. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Carrying the bowl of water, walk widdershins around the circle, chanting, “By the heart of the God and Goddess, the circle is open but unbroken.”

DARING TO DREAM

THE GOD IN LEO

We roar into the world of the Sacred Masculine in the sign of Leo, the fire sign of action, power and authority. The lion is a powerful creature that captures our imaginations, bringing us to an understanding of power. The harvest is beginning and the summer is fading. The work of planting, tending and growing begins to bear fruit. The first fruits of the harvest are gathered to be changed into food for the table. The rest is being preserved for the winter. We are very aware that the year is turning. Soon the leaves will fall.

In the life of the God, He becomes the head of the family. The God becomes the householder, providing the family with food and material goods. Beyond that, He provides them with the pathway to success and also the pathway to creating dreams. He understands how His dreams have changed from those of an adolescent boy to those of a grown up and responsible man. He works brings His dreams and the dreams of His family into being.

To nurture the dreams, He must understand Himself and His dreams. From them, springs His own authority, His center and His knowing, understanding of Himself. From His center of knowing, He uses the power of will to create the reality and the dreams.

You may see a man grab his briefcase and get into his car in order to go to his successful job, but we can see with our spiritual sense a man who uses the power of his will and the strength of his authority to create a world of success for himself and his family. He sees his family grow and accomplish things. He has created the first harvest for himself and his family.

The sign of Leo is the sign of the lion, a fire sign signifying strength and the ability to accomplish great things. A sense of power and authority are the hallmarks of Leo. Lions have long fascinated us. Their size, power and ferocity excite our imagination. The lion has been used as a symbol of accomplishment and learning. The lion family or pride is a complex unit of interdependence. The male keeps the order and the hierarchy, providing protection from intruders. The females hunt, providing food and nurturing the children. Each lion functions according to his or her nature, so together, they create a family that survives and thrives. The sign of Leo is an intense and active sign. In Leo, the Sacred Masculine loves to dare and take risks. Not the unthinking risks of a stupid idea, but the risks of daring to dream. Leos dare to dream; they risk all that they have for themselves, and for those they love.

The Greek God Prometheus shows us an example of daring to dream and then risking bringing those dreams into a reality. Prometheus was the son of Titans and was admitted to Olympus because He had been neutral in the war between the Titans. Zeus gave Him

and His brother, Epimetheus, the responsibility to create humans. Prometheus created people out of clay and water and Athena blew Life into them. Zeus also gave Prometheus the role of protector of the people. As a boon, Prometheus gave the gift of fire to people to differentiate them from all the other creatures on Earth. Before this time, that fire could only be possessed by the Gods. This gift gave people the ability to be God and Goddess.

This gift of fire angered Zeus and He took it away from the people. Prometheus then stole the fire and gave it back to them. Now furious, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a great rock. Every day an eagle flew at Him to peck out His liver to eat. Prometheus' immortal body renewed itself and the eagle attacked Him again the next day. He had been sentenced to eternal torture.

Many years later, Prometheus was rescued by Hercules and readmitted to Olympus.

Prometheus is guided by His love and sense of responsibility for His creations, His children. He wants them to succeed, to be divine, and He gives them the gift they need. This gift is a sacrifice willingly and lovingly given. An act of sacrifice such as this cannot be forced. It has to come from the heart and the soul. It has to be executed from the will of the person making the sacrifice with a full awareness of the risks.

A sacrifice that comes from guilt, or a sense of having to sacrifice, is not a gift at all. It is a burden. When this happens, the sacrificer becomes a martyr. The receiver feels there must be redress, and then there is no sacrifice but a business deal or a bargain. A sacrifice comes from the depths of the soul for the good of all and without thought of reward. There is no reward be-

cause in a sacrifice, whatever is given is a gift.

DREAMING INTO BEING

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN LEO

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about sacrifices you have made in your life. Have you made them for others? How do you feel about those sacrifices? Think now about your dreams when you were a child, when you were an adolescent, and as an adult. How have your dreams changed over the course of your life? How do you feel about those dreams, and about the changes you have made? Do you have regrets? What gives you pride, and what makes you happy? What have you accomplished? How have your dreams become reality?

Cast the Circle:

Using a lighted candle or other fire symbol, walk deosil around the circle and chant, "The circle is cast," three times.

Summon the Guardians and Elementals:

Summon the East:

"Sisters and Brothers of the Eastern Realms, Thinkers and Dreamers of the Cloud-Covered World, join me

in my sacred rite. Bring the wisdom of my mind and meld it with my dreams. Sylphs, Winged Creatures of the Air, bring your energy to my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Cousins of the Southern Realms, the Willful and Passionate Ones of the Fire-Shaped World, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the passion of my creativity and meld it with my dreams. Salamanders, Creatures of the Fire, bring your energy to my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Mothers and Fathers of the Western Realms, the Loving Ones of the Watery World, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the depths of emotion and meld it with my dreams. Undines, Creatures of the Sea and Stream, bring your energy to my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Grandmothers and Grandfathers of the Northern Realms, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the deep silence of the soul and meld it with my dreams. Gnomes, the Silent Ones of the Earth, join me in my sacred rite. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Wise and Great Athena, who inspires us with the breath of Life, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the wisdom of the owl, the deep understanding of creativity and the wisdom of heart and soul. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Great and Generous Prometheus, who gave us the gift of fire, join me in my sacred rite. Bring the wisdom of sacrifice and the deep understanding of love and sacrifice. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and then let it out with a sigh. Take another deep breath and then let it out with a snort, like a horse. Take a third deep breath. Hold it. Let it out with a tone. As the vibrations from the last notes of the tone fade, see the tone as tiny circles or dots dancing around inside your body. See those dots dance throughout your body as the energy of you. See the dots move around your head, your shoulders, arms and hands, move through your torso, through your legs and to your feet. Cast your awareness down to your feet and send roots down through the Earth. Find a place to anchor yourself and do that firmly, allowing for flexibility. As you move your awareness up your roots, pull energy from the Mother Earth into yourself. See that energy dance with yours and the energies commingle, embrace and dance. Feel that mingled energy move through your body, up through your legs, through your torso to your shoulders, arms and hands, through your neck and fill your head. Feel that dancing energy move out of your crown and spill out into the Universe. Feel the Universe reach down and meld with that energy and feel the three energies dance together. The three energies fill your body and you are rooted in the Mother Earth and embraced by the Universe.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“I have dreams, big ones and small ones. Some I

have given up, some I have accomplished, and some are yet to be. I go deep into the Spirit to find my dreams and bring them into Be-ing.

Meditation:

Take a deep breath and then another. Take a third deep breath and then let it out with a sigh. Close your eyes and settle yourself comfortably where you are. Breathe deeply and regularly. You are lying next to a campfire on a bedroll. It is the middle of the night, and you can hear the night sounds beyond the fire. You are not afraid because you know you are protected. The night sounds lull you and you sleep deeply. In your sleep, you see your dream. Watch it closely....

After the dream is done, you wake completely rested and alert. You remember your dream in great detail. It is daylight now and you look around the camp. You are in a clearing beneath a large mountain. High above you in the sky there is a huge eagle. As you look above you, you see a man chained to the rock. It is Prometheus. You are not afraid. You climb up the rock to Him. It is difficult but not impossible, and you can do it. Up, up you go. You are next to Him. He is very happy to see you and greets you by name....

You find an outcropped rock and sit down. You offer to unchain Him, but He refuses to let you do it. He tells you that He has something more important for you to know. He talks with you about your dream and about bringing it into Be-ing....

He tells you what you must risk to live your dream. Listen carefully....

At the end, He will tell you why He stays chained and what His sacrifice means. Listen again...

When it is time, you will find a cup of water in your

hand. Give Him a drink. He speaks a word to you that is a special magical word for your dream. Keep that word as a talisman for your dreaming...

It is time to go and you climb downward back to your camp. You sit by the fire and chant your word.

When it is time, take a deep breath and open your eyes. You are back in your sacred circle.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Stand up, move around, and chant your dream word until the energy moves upward into the Universe. Whoosh!

Cakes and Ale:

“Thank you to all the spirits present here. Thank you for the drink that quenches my thirst and the food that nurtures my body. Thank you for the ability to dream and the courage to risk for my dreams. Blessed be.”

Center and Ground:

Take three deep breaths and let the last one out with a tone. Feel the vibrations of that tone and see the energy dancing through your body. The energy of you, the Mother and the Universe dance together as one. Cast your awareness to that place in the Universe where you are embraced, and gently release the embrace, knowing that you are always in the embrace of the Universe every time you look at the sky. Move your awareness down to where you are anchored and gently release the anchor, knowing that you can always be in the love of the Mother every time you step on the ground. Bring your roots upward and you are whole and alive, grounded again in the Mother and the Universe.

Farewell to the God:

“Mighty and Generous Prometheus, thank You for Your presence in my sacred rite. Thank You for the wisdom of sacrifice and the love that comes from the soul. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Wise and Inspiring Athena, thank You for Your presence in my sacred rite. Thank you for wisdom and power to accomplish. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:***Farewell to the North:***

Grandfathers and Grandmothers of the Deepest Silence and Gnomes, burrowing deep into the soul, thank you for your presence in my sacred rite. Thank you for the blessings of the soul. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Fathers and Mothers of the Heart and Undines, swimming deep into our emotions, thank you for your presence in my sacred rite. Thank you for the blessings of the heart. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Cousins of the Will and Creativity, and Salamanders burning bright into our passion, thank you for your presence in my sacred rite. Thank you for the blessings of creativity. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail

and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Sisters and Brothers of the Mind, and Sylphs, flying swiftly into thought, thank you for your presence in my sacred rite. Thank you for the blessings of thought. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

With your fire object, walk three times widdershins around the circle. Chant, “The circle is open but unbroken.”

DANCING LIFE AND DEATH

THE GOD IN VIRGO

We move onto the earthen path of Virgo. The days are shortening. It is obvious now that the dark is overtaking the light. Everyone is beginning to prepare for the change of seasons. The harvest begins in earnest. The natural world anticipates the winter. Harvest activities, such as canning and preserving, are slowing and everyone is preparing for the first frost. Children are getting ready to go back to school. Summer has come to its end.

The God has reached full maturity and His step slows somewhat. He is at the pinnacle of His career. His accomplishments are many. He is donning the robes of wisdom. Others seek Him out for advice and His ability to see through to the heart of the matter. Life is moving forward swiftly now and He can see the end of His life. His children begin their first moves towards independence. He applauds them, mourning them at the same time, for He knows they will no longer need Him. He is full of life-long advice for them but knows that they must now make their own decisions.

He learns to love them and to let them go. To love them and keep them closed in His embrace could make them dependent. They would be unable to think for themselves. They could be crushed. Opening His arms, He lets them go. Trusting that they have learned from His lessons, He dares to hope that they will be happy and successful. In His own inner life, He has learned that the bitter and the sweet come together, and that Life is a dance of joy and sorrow, of living and dying.

He understands now that His joyous youthful life has taken on organization and coherence. He has the tools and skills to turn surprise into opportunity. He wants to share those abilities with others. While Life is taking on coherence, He sees through the chaos and learns that He cannot control everything. Indeed, He knows that He cannot really control much of anything. So He surrenders and opens His heart and mind to the possibilities of maturity and age.

The sign of Virgo moves us into analysis, organization and planning. We have lived long enough to understand much of the world. We have cast aside our youthful, all-knowing arrogance, realizing that we do not know everything, and sometimes we know almost nothing. Virgos like things ordered and organized. They like to see appropriate rewards and retributions given. It is through wisdom that Virgos learn you must let go and let chaos dance.

It is Shiva, the Dancing God, who reveals the integration of the Dark and the Light. His stories are about life and death. Shiva is action and force, while the feminine power, Shakti, is receptive power and life. He energizes Her, while She gives Him knowledge. They move together intertwined in the Dance of Life, a dance that both creates and destroys. Shiva summons demons

and wears a necklace of skulls. He is also worshipped as a regenerative God in the forms of the lingam, or phallus. He represents the process of the life cycle: creation and destruction in one. Shakti becomes woman and His consort as Parvati. She manifests in many ways, from the sensual Uma to the Destroyer Mother, Kali.

Autumn teaches us that without death, we cannot have creation. As the leaves fall and the garden decays, we see the beginning of death. We feel the power of decay and smell the rot. It is comforting to know that this death enriches the soil. When we realize that the demons Shiva summons are really raw energy—the elemental powers of creation and destruction—we begin to understand the fearsome aspect of Shiva. There is no negative or positive; what is, just is.

The sense of order Virgo craves becomes obvious during the dance of creation and destruction. As we move through the year, we dance the steps one at a time, creating the magic of Life and Death. We dance these steps in ritual and it transforms us, body and soul.

DANCING LIFE AND DEATH

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN VIRGO

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about how Life is organized and put together. What could be different? At the

waning of the year, what do you regret? At the waning of the year, what do you celebrate? What is leaving your life as harvest, and what is being preserved?

Cast the Circle:

Carrying a stone or rock, walk deosil around the circle three times in silence. At the end, strike the rock with your athame and say, “The circle is cast and I am between the worlds.”

Summon the Guardians and Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Those Who Guard the Eastern Gate of the World, who live in the clouds, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the cleansing breezes of clear thought. Sylphs, Creatures of the Air, wing your way into my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Those Who Guard the Southern Gate of the World, who live in the fire, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the burning flames of desire. Salamanders, Creatures of the Flame, burn your way into my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Those Who Guard the Western Gate of the World, those who live in the waves, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the flooding waters of emotion and heart. Undines, swim your way into my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Those Who Guard the Northern Gate of the World, who live in the rocks and rills, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the centering Earth of the body. Gnomes, Creatures of the Earth, roll into my sacred circle. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Shakti, Mother Energy of the Universe, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the understanding of beginnings and endings. Keep me safe and help me learn. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Shiva, the God Who Dances and the God of the Elemental Powers, join me in my sacred circle. Bring an understanding of creation and destruction. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and then let it go with a loud noise. Take a deep breath and then let it go with a sigh. Take a third deep breath. Hold it. Let it go with a tone. Continue to breathe deeply and send the breath through your whole being.

You are at the edge of a forest in the autumn of the year. You are a weed, growing straight and tall. The breezes become colder. You fall gently to the Earth and lie there. Take in a deep breath and then exhale it slowly as you sink into the Earth. Your weed-body begins to meld with the Earth. You feel yourself dissipate into the Earth, mingling with the soil. The Earth reaches up and holds you lightly and protectively in its embrace. You are calm and peaceful. The Sun beats

gently down upon you, warming you. You are grounded in the embrace of the Earth and warmed by the love of the Sun.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“It is the fall of the year and vacation is over. Time to get busy and get organized. It is also time to begin to reflect and to think about the end of things. It seems a contradiction to be getting organized and pondering the end. I will go within and create the Dance of Life in my life.”

Meditation:

Take a deep breath and then let it out with a sigh. Take another breath. Hold it. Let it go with a cleansing sigh. Take another breath and continue to breathe deeply. Close your eyes. You are standing in front of a magnificent walkway that leads to temple. You move slowly onto the walkway, noticing everything: the sounds, the smells and the sights. It is very interesting, spectacular. There are mosaics here, and in them you see the important events of your life. Stop and look at them. Study them. They are works of art, so take your time....

As you go forward, one of the mosaics stands out and catches your attention. It is the scene that is most important to you at this moment in your life. Study it. Reflect on it. What is good about it? What is bad about it? If you suspended judgment, what would this mosaic say to you? Listen....

As you are studying it and listening to its wisdom, you hear music, wonderful music. It is your favorite music. As you look to the door of the temple, you see the God Shiva standing in front of you. He dances forward

and dances around you. The music speaks of Death and Life. Listen....

Shiva holds you in His arms and you become the dance with Him. You dance the dance of Shiva, creating Life and destroying Life. You feel the elemental power of destruction....

You dance the dance of Shiva, creating Life and destroying Life. You feel the elemental power of creation. You feel the power of destruction. You witness that one flows into the other, endlessly. And onward you dance....

When the music ends, Shiva releases you from His embrace, and with a last remembered word, He kisses you and is gone. You whisper your thanks and then walk back the way you came.

Take a deep breath and one more. Open your eyes and you are back in your sacred circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

Take the word that Shiva whispered to you and chant it repeatedly until the power raises and—whoosh—goes off into the Universe.

Cakes and Ale:

“Spirits present here in my circle, thank you for this food and this drink, harvested and prepared. Bless it to nurture my body and to quench my thirst. Thank you. Blessed be.”

Center and Ground:

You are again the weed, lying on the ground in the embrace of the Earth and warmed by the Sun. Take a deep breath and remember this feeling of protection and groundedness. Take another deep breath. Release

yourself from the embrace of the Earth and breathe out the embrace of the Sun. Know that you can always come back to this place and center yourself in the peace of the Earth and Sun.

Farewell to the God:

“Shiva, God of Life and Death, thank You for Your dance in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Shakti, Flowing Vessel of the Universe, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle and thank You for the wisdom of Death and Life. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and the Elementals:

Farewell to the North:

“Guardians and Elemental Spirits of the North, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Thank you for the wisdom of Death and the silence of Life. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians and Elemental Spirits of the West, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Thank you for the profound love of the Universe. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

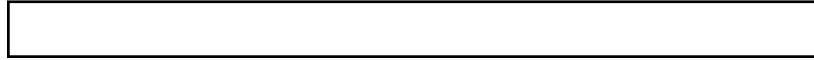
“Guardians and Elemental Spirits of the South, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Thank you for the will to survive and thrive. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians and Elemental Spirits of the East, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Thank you for the clarity of intuition, thought and imagination. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

With your rock or stone, walk three times widdershins around the circle. Strike the rock with your athame and say, “The circle is open but unbroken.”



BALANCING LIFE

THE GOD IN LIBRA

Our exploration of the Sacred Masculine moves us into Libra, the air sign concerned with balance and justice. We are firmly into fall now; it is obvious that winter is not far behind. The frost has come and the gardens have ceased growing. The leaves are falling. There are road trips to the north to see the colors of the changing foliage unless you are already living in the midst of magnificent colors. We find there is a tinge of frost on our souls. As the nights lengthen, it is clear that the dark is overtaking the light.

We see the God grow in wisdom. He is an elder now, vital and active, and deferred to by the next generation. The deference shocks Him until He realizes He is full of the power of His own understanding. His wisdom includes the long view. He can tell long, captivating stories to illustrate His points. This frequently stretches the young ones' patience. They want to get to the point and then get on with Life. The God still works hard, but can relax and enjoy the life He has created. He sees His children grown, moving forward in the world, becoming parents themselves. He enjoys the

fruits of His harvest. He sees His children as His “fruits” that He loves. Sometimes He deplores their choices, but through all, He loves and cares for them.

In Libra, we see the balance of right and wrong, good and bad, night and day. Often balance comes after we have spent time living at one extreme or another. In seeking balance, we learn that most of Life is living in the gray areas, that black and white have no real meaning, and that they are here to create contrast.

I have spent many years reading Tarot. There are cards for justice and for judgment. When interpreting the Justice card, I say one of the lessons learned is that Life is not fair, but that fair is demanding fairness. I interpret the Judgment card by saying you get what you deserve and, because the Universe is so large and expansive, most issues of punishment and retribution are very small. The only large things are forgiveness and joy. You end up getting what you deserve: joy.

While seeking justice and the final judgment, we must abandon our preconceived notions of fairness, punishment and reward. The final judgment of the God and the Goddess comes from the heart and soul, where there is only room for love and compassion, and that brings us to joy every time.

Recently, an email list member wrote in fury because one of her cats had been killed on the busy road in front of her house. She was so very angry that she said that as part of her farewell ritual for the cat, she was going to ask that the anguish of the kitty be sent to the vehicle owner three times three. It seemed to her a fitting revenge for the pain her cat suffered.

Sometimes events come together in symmetry, because a few days after reading her anguished message and the day before I wrote this chapter, I was walking

my dogs in my yard and we scared a cat, who was hiding in the trees beside the road. The cat ran out into the road and was hit by a truck. It happened so quickly that there was no possible way the driver could have stopped. A loud keening sound escaped from me as the spirit of the cat came out its body and sped into the light. It was gone. It was terrible, and I was part of the process.

When I described this incident to a friend, I said it was partly my fault. My friend said there was no fault; this is all part of Life. And so it is.

I was sad, but the driver did not deserve my fury any more than I deserved blame.

There is a balance between fury, anger, grief and love. That balance is compassion and forgiveness.

In ancient Persia, the God of Passage and Justice, Rasnu, stood on the bridge to the otherworld, weighing the souls of the dead. The beautiful Goddess, Peris, conducted the souls of the righteous to the land of the Blessed. That is all I know about them, but I can only imagine the toll it takes to render judgments like these. Moving someone onto a new path in his or her life is an honor, and it can also be a terrifying responsibility.

In the end, we are all blessed when we have done our best and lived our lives from our hearts and our souls.

FINDING THE BALANCE

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN LIBRA

Creating Sacred Space:

Spend some time thinking about what angers, saddens and enrages you. What do you want for justice? What would make you feel better about unfairness? Can you let those feelings go? What happens when you let them go? Is that forgiveness? What happens when you forgive? What happens when you do not forgive? What happens when you deliberately practice compassion?

Casting the Circle:

Walk around the circle deosil, three times. With your breath, blow your circle into being.

Summon the Guardians and Elementals:

Summon the East:

“Greetings, Children of the Eastern Gate, Guardians of the Birth of Ideas, join me in my sacred circle. Sylphs, Winged Ones, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the dawn of new wonders. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Greetings, Amazons and Warriors of the Southern Gate, Guardians of the Spark of Creative Action, join me in my sacred circle. Salamanders, fiery ones, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the power of action. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Lovers of the Western Gate, Guardians of the Heart of Everything, join me in my sacred circle. Undines, Watery Ones, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the heart of compassion. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Aged Ones of the Northern Gate, Guardians of the Wisdom of the Ages, join me in my sacred circle. Gnomes, Earthy Ones, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the deep stillness of the All that is. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Beautiful Spirit of Love and Compassion, Peris, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the blessings of passage and the understanding of love. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Powerful Rasnu, God of Judgment, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the compassion of judgment lovingly given. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and then let it out with a sigh. Take a deeper breath and then let it out with a loud noise. Take a third deep breath. Hold it. Let it out

with a tone. As the last vibrations of the tone vibrate through your body, close your eyes and see yourself as a tree. Sway a little with the breeze. Feel the sap rise within you and fill your body and your branches. Feel the peacefulness of being a tree. Cast your awareness down to your roots and send them downward into the Earth. Downward you go, embraced by the Mother Earth. Find a place to anchor yourself and wrap your roots around that place. Allow yourself some flexibility.

As your awareness moves back up your roots, be aware of the energy of the Mother Earth coming with you. As your awareness pools at your feet, send it outward, creating more roots just below the surface. You are steadied there. Feel your awareness move upward. Lift your branches up in joyous embrace as the Sun reaches down to you and holds you in His embrace. Stand there for a second rooted in the love of the Mother and embraced by the love of the Father Sun. Take a deep breath and open your eyes.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

I am a person of experience. I have made mistakes and I have accomplished much. Sometimes I do not see my accomplishments or mistakes because I am too close. I go to the God to learn to be compassionate with myself. I seek a balance between justice and compassion.

Meditation:

Take a deep breath and then let it out with a sigh. Take another deep breath. Hold it and then let it go, exhaling deeply. Close your eyes and continue to breathe deeply and calmly. You are standing beneath the dark moon. The stars dimly light your way. As you

walk forward, you hear lovely music. You are standing by a deep crevice and you can see there is no bottom. Curiously, you are not afraid—awestruck, but not fearful. You hear a voice call your name, and you come to a bridge that stretches over the crevice and then disappears in the dark. It is a stark landscape.

Standing before the bridge is the God. He is ready to take your toll and to direct you on the next step of your journey. You ask the costs, and the God tells you that you must answer His questions. You agree.

The God then asks you about your hopes, your dreams, and your desires. You speak them, and as you do, you listen..

The God asks you about your regrets, your sorrows and your pains. You speak them, and as you do, you listen...

As you talk, you see your life clearly and ask the God for His judgment. He tells you what it is, reaches inside you, pulls out your soul, and then shows it to you. You see its shape and its color. You see its past and its potential. He holds your soul in His hand and you see His power. He can squeeze your soul out of existence, if He so chooses. And yet He does not. He holds it to His heart, and it is transformed. Look at your soul, study it and love it. That is how He sees you....

The God speaks to you and tells you the toll is whatever you think is fair. In a word, you tell Him the value. He steps aside and lets you pass. You cross the bridge to the other side and stand there. The God is standing before you and asks you what the toll is for Him to pass. "Judge me," He says, "for you are God." You look deeply into His eyes....

You speak your judgment of what you see and sense. You tell Him the toll. He pays it, and then crosses the

bridge. You continue on your way. The sun rises and you see the landscape. This is where you live, and it is your life....

Take a deep breath and come back to your circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

Using one tone, move around the circle. Move faster and sound the tone louder until the cone of power surges up and goes out into the Universe with a loud whoosh.

Cakes and Ale:

“All spirits present, thank you for the balance of justice and the beauty of my soul. Bless this food and this drink that I may always be satisfied. Thank you.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and raise your arms above your head. You are the tree again. Cast your awareness to the place where the Sun embraces your branches and gently disconnect yourself from that embrace, knowing that you can always go back. Slowly move your awareness down your body until it pools at your feet. Pull in the lateral roots. Move slowly down to where you are anchored in the Mother Earth and gently disconnect, knowing that you can always go back. Gently disconnect the embrace, and move the roots back to your feet. Open your eyes and move around a little bit. You are back in your sacred circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Stern and Compassionate God Rasnu, thank You for Your judgment and Your compassion. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Delightful and Beautiful Peris, thank You for Your guidance. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and Elementals:***Farewell to the North:***

“Silent and Wise Guardians and Elementals of the North, thank you for your presence in my circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Loving and Hearty Guardians and Elementals of the West, thank you for your presence in my circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Creating and Creative Guardians and Elementals of the South, thank you for your presence in my circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Bright and Light guardians and Elementals of the East, thank you for your presence in my circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Walking widdershins around the circle, blow out your circle and open the gate between the worlds.

TRANSFORMING LIFE

THE GOD IN SCORPIO

We move deeper into the Sacred Masculine as we dive into Scorpio. Scorpio is an intense sign of passion, transformation and healing. Scorpio moves the seeker into the unbelievable depths of emotional healing. It is a water sign, challenging us to dive deep into our emotions. We can dive deep into our psyche to face what is there. It is not a light-hearted way to approach Life and demands a great deal of each person. The God in Scorpio blesses our work with gifts of insight and passion.

The God is facing death but He is not yet dead. His body weakens. He remembers the past, but does not always appreciate the present. He is looking at what is commonly called the “big picture,” and it astounds Him. The God knows He is going to die. He knows He must face His fear of death. He looks back on His life with satisfaction, contemplation and understanding. The search for wisdom is over. He is now at the point of understanding of self, where just being is all that is necessary. As He looks forward, He sees that Life will go on without Him. He knows He will not see the birth of

all His grandchildren or great-grandchildren. He will no longer react to events or smell the roses. He knows that He will be remembered for His strengths and for His weaknesses. He knows that He will be forgotten.

Now He spends His time facing death with a mixture of emotions, balanced by the wisdom of what He has learned in a lifetime. He becomes many men as He faces the final silence. Proud of His accomplishments and His family, He can go with a sense of what is done is good. He feels anguish over what was lost and seeks to make amends. Because others have gone before Him, He feels loss and loneliness. He is finished with this life and He is not. The things that have not been done may cause Him to be angry or reflective. He realizes that He carries those things forward as part of His karma. What He has finished well also gets carried forward as His wisdom into His next life. This is a complex mystery, unique to each individual.

It is the Mystery that draws Him now. Death reaches out to Him through the veil of the Otherworld. How He passes through that death—kicking and screaming, or resigned, or happy—is His own choice. In the end, He faces the Lord of Death not with the trappings of His life, but only as Himself and the wisdom He has gained.

This is a deep Mystery that words do not adequately explain, even though we live the experience. This is not a problem that can be solved; the Mystery can only be lived in our hearts and souls.

There are other transformations besides death, of course, but it is death that reaches into the depths of our souls and makes us examine everything. Death and its presence obliterates our sense of what is normal so that we must re-examine what is normal. That is what happens in all transformations. What is normal disappears

so completely that normal no longer exists. And what comes after the transformation is a complete overhaul of Life.

There are expressions in several spiritual traditions, such as “before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water; after enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.” What is profound about this statement is that, after enlightenment, chopping wood and carrying water takes on a whole new meaning, and import.

The Welsh have rich legends about the Land of the Dead. Their Underworld, Anwn, is a place with immortal residents. Humans can travel to Annwn. The land of Annwn was a source of stories for the Celtic world. There are legends that the God of Annwn, Gwyn ap Nudd, is one of the leaders of the Wild Hunt, riding through the skies to raise the spirits of the Dead. He hunts with the red-eared hounds, whose job it is to gather up the souls of those who have died and chase them into the Land of the Dead where they belong. These souls are otherwise lost and will cause damage to living people. Gwyn ap Nudd’s job is a fearsome one, but He is performing a divine service to both the Living and the Dead by bringing the Dead home. Without His work, the Dead become ghosts who linger on this plane as pale reflections of what they once were. The richness of the Welsh legends mirrors the richness of Life and Death. The God has much to teach us about death, about transformation. It is not a journey for the timid, but we all walk the path and it all comes to us, invited or not.

EMBRACING THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUL

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN SCORPIO

Creating Sacred Space:

Think about the events in your life that have transformed you. What were the catalysts? How did you handle those events? Were you changed? How do you feel about that now?

“You are who you are.” When that statement is made, how do you feel, and what does it mean to you? This is an intense ritual, so be sure to go to the circle centered and grounded.

Opening the Circle:

Walk around the circle once, breathing deeply and chanting, “By breath, the circle is cast.” Walk around the circle again, chanting, “By will and passion, the circle is cast.” Walk around the circle a third time chanting, “By body and soul, the circle is cast.”

Summon the Elementals and Guardians

Summon the East:

“Great Ones of the Dawn and of the East, Guardians of Our Mind and the Power of Thought, join me in

my sacred circle. Bring the joys and delights of an inquiring mind. Sylphs, Creatures of the Air, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the beauty of the sky and the cleansing power of breath. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Great Ones of the Midday and of the South, Guardians of Our Creativity and the Power of Imaginations, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the joys and delights of plans dreamed and plans accomplished. Join me in my sacred circle. Salamanders, Creatures of the Fire, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the dancing beauty of the fire and the cleansing power of fire. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Great Ones of the Sunset and of the West, Guardians of Our Heart and the Power of the Heart, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the joys and delights of a heart opened. Undines, Creatures of the Waters, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the beauty of the water and the cleansing power of water. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Great Ones of Midnight and of the North, Guardians of Our Body and the Power of Death, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the joys and delights of the body. Gnomes, Creatures of the Earth, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the sacredness of the Earth and the cleansing power of the Dark. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Rhiannon, Maid of the Dead, Mistress of the Singing Birds, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the power

of endurance, the power of forgiveness and bring transformation. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Pwyll, God of the Underworld, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the power of change and transformation, bring discipline and joy. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep centering breath and settle comfortably into your circle. Feel the surrounding presence of the God and Goddess and of the directions. Feel Their love. Take another deep breath and then let it out with a tone. Continue to breathe deeply. Cast your awareness up and down your body and see the beautiful energy found inside you. See that energy fill you and heal you. As you continue to breathe, see yourself beside the ocean, lying on a large rock. As you lie there, conscious of your energy, feel the energy of the rock reach up and meld with yours. See that energy begin to dance inside your body, dancing in harmony with your energy, filling you with that melded energy. Feel the solid love of the Mother Earth, dancing inside you. Cast your awareness to the sky and feel the heat of the Sun on you. Feel that energy move inside you and see the energy begin to dance with the melded energy inside you. Feel those three energies dance inside you, filling you and healing you. You are grounded in the love of the Mother Earth and held in the embrace of the Sun. Take a deep breath and open your eyes. You are back in your circle.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“I am a person who has lived a life with mistakes, luck and good decisions. I have been transformed by

living, and I celebrate that. Today, I seek to go before the God and find the transformation of death without dying.”

Meditation:

Settle yourself comfortably in your space. Take a moment to feel the presence of the elementals, guardians, the Goddess and the God. Feel Their love and affection for you. Feel Their awe that you are about to undertake this work. Take a deep breath and breathe that in that awe. Take another deep breath and breathe in peace. Take in another deep breath and breathe in confidence. Keep on breathing deeply.

You are standing in front of a cave, deep in the forest. It is very dark and it is late fall. The branches of the trees are nearly bare of leaves, and the fallen leaves crunch below your feet. You can smell the spice of fallen apples and other fruit. You feel the nip in the air, though you are not cold. You look inside the cave and find that it is very dark. You are not afraid. You feel a light touch on your arm and you look and see it is Rhiannon. She is older and there is much gray in Her long hair. She whispers words of wisdom to you, and you listen.

She guides you forward into the cave. You feel Her guiding touch as you move forward, completely without sight. You use other senses to find your way. Notice what senses you use and how you use them. These are gifts to you in your everyday life....

Finally you reach your destination, and Rhiannon leaves you with a final word and a kiss. You stand before the entrance. This is the entrance to the home of the Lord of the Dead. You move through the entrance, aware of everything until you stand before the Lord of the Dead....

The Lord of the Dead stands before you in majesty; proud, strong and tall. You sense in Him the great power of sorrow and joy. You sense in Him all the stories of the world. You stand there for a long time....

The Lord of the Dead reaches out to take all of your clothes and all your ornaments. You stand before Him naked and exposed. How do you feel?

He walks around you and looks, really looks, at you. He then tells you the story of your life of transformations. Listen....

When He finishes telling you about your life, He tells you about Death. Listen deeply....

It is over. The Lord of the Dead brings out a beautiful cloak and surrounds you with it, telling you this cloak is the cloak of all your transformations—past, present, future. It is beautiful....

And you have in your hand a gift for the Lord of the Dead, because even He enjoys presents. Give it to Him with your thanks and then move outward. As you begin to leave, He stops you with a gesture of His hand. He makes another hand-gesture and you find yourself mounted on a huge horse. It is as black as midnight and its eyes are red and bright. It snorts and its hooves strike the ground. Sparks fly from those hooves. With a third gesture, you and the Lord of Death ride out into the world and into the night....

You see ghosts fleeing in front of you. The Lord of Death signals to you and you chase these dead souls. You see more and more of them. And as you ride wildly in the night, the ghosts move faster and faster. Instinctively, you know that you are chasing them home, to the Land of the Dead....

Your chase is very fast. You see before you the Land of the Dead. As the ghosts try to get away, you

focus on them, moving them into the entrance. They reach the Land of the Dead. As they cross the threshold, they are changed, because they are home....

When the last soul has gone home, you dismount from the horse and stand there for a moment. The Lord of the Dead stands before you. He thanks you for your assistance and wraps you in a tight embrace. You stand there in the wisdom of Death....

He releases you and is gone. Take three deep breaths and come back to your sacred circle.

Raising the Cone of Power:

If you have a word or phrase to chant, use it. Otherwise, use a tone to raise the cone of power. Sing your tone louder and stronger, faster and wiser. Dance or move in place until the power rises. *Whoosh!* Out it goes, into the Universe.

Cakes and Ale:

Do eat something to ground this experience into your everyday life. Take the drink and hold it up to the spirits gathered and say, "Thank you for the experience in the cave and the joy of thirst quenched." Take the food and hold it up to the spirits gathered and say, "Thank you for the walk in the cave and for the joy of hunger satisfied." Spend some time celebrating the wisdom of your transformations.

Center and Ground: You are back on the rock by the ocean. Take a moment to feel the melded energy swirling inside you. Remember the centering comfort of the love of the Mother Earth and the embrace of the Sun. Take another deep breath and disconnect yourself from that rock. Take another deep breath and disconnect

yourself from the embrace of the Sun. Feel the energy of yourself swirl inside you, filling you and healing you. Take yet another deep breath and open your eyes.

Farewell to the God:

“Pwyll, God of the Netherworld, Wise One and Fair, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Thank You for the cloak of transformations and for the wisdom of Death. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Beautiful Rhiannon and Wise Woman, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Thank You for Your guidance and for Your comfort. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Elementals and the Guardians

Farewell to the North:

“Powerful Guardians of Midnight, Creatures of the Deep Earth, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Powerful Guardians of the Sunset, Creatures of the Deep Waters, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Powerful Guardians of the Midday, Creatures of the Fire, thank you for your presence in my sacred

circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Powerful Guardians of the Dawn, Creatures of the Air, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

Walk widdershins around the circle three times, chanting, “By my body, by my mind, by my passion and by my heart, the circle is open but unbroken.”

LIGHTENING UP

THE GOD IN SAGITTARIUS

The last step on this exploration is a wintry step into Sagittarius. Like a welcome thaw in winter, the fire sign of Sagittarius sheds Light onto the Darkness that balances the intensity of Scorpio and the deep earth of Capricorn. In the midst of winter, we celebrate the return of the light with the Solstice. In the midst of the death's darkness, there is mirth, light and laughter.

In Sagittarius, we see the explorer, someone who goes boldly and fearlessly. The sign has an exuberance and lightheartedness that often disguises the courage and the deep commitment to change. The sign of Sagittarius is between Scorpio and Capricorn, two signs that search the depths of the soul. Sagittarius also searches there, but with joyful abandonment. Sagittarius is expansive, and the explorer pushes at the limits of the soul, both as an individual and as a member of society. The depth of Sagittarius is in what he is willing to explore. Nothing is off-limits, including Death.

For the God has died. He has faced Death to pass through the veil between the worlds. On other side, He rests there, reflecting on His life and on Death's transformation. He rests beneath the earth as rotting flesh,

enfolded in the arms of the Earth as He comes softly apart.

He melds with all that is in a gentle and long process. The creatures of Earth burrow in His flesh and are fed. His soul soars to the next world to sing with joy, and He stays there. All who love Him on that side greet Him, and all who love Him on this side of the veil mourn Him.

Finally, when the time is right with the Solstice light, He returns. The Sun is reborn at Solstice. Again and again and again, we see Life's eternal nature through the passing of the seasons. The life of the God is the life of the seasons. As we watch the Sun, we watch the God being born, growing, fathering, elderly and dying. It is, again, the mystery of the path.

We celebrate Christmas at this time, joyful and happy. One of the delightful seasonal stories is the medieval poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a tale that comes to us without the name of the author. I have read it several times and each time I learn new things. Gawain was a knight of the Goddess in King Arthur's court. The Green Knight comes to the court of King Arthur at Yule to challenge the King. Sir Gawain takes that challenge and sets out to fulfill his quest. During that quest, he faces his own fallibility and imperfection. It is unsettling to face that. He goes back to court and is a scowling face at the Twelfth Night celebrations. Arthur and his Queen (this was in happier times before the legends of Arthur and Lancelot) tell Gawain that he should be happy and dance in the light, in celebration of the season. In our modern vernacular, he was told to "get over himself," and to "lighten up and get on with it." Lightening it up and lighting up for the Solstice!

They exhort him to drop his self-criticism and remember his natural exuberance. They are reminding

him that Yule is a time to be ecstatic and joyful. They remind him, as we all should be reminded, to shine like the sun in the middle of winter.

In Greece, the Sun God is Helios. He drives the sun chariot across the skies. At night, He rides beneath the ocean. Before the Hellenic times, He was a fairly universal symbol of the Sun. The cult of Helios was centered on the island of Rhodes. One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Colossus of Rhodes, is believed to be a tribute to Him. He had several wives, including the ocean nymph Rhodos, after whom the island of Rhodes is named.

Rhodos is the daughter of Aphrodite and Poseidon, and She bore Helios many children. One of Her grandchildren is the sorceress, Circe.

Part of the meditation in the following ritual is one that I call “corpsing.” A friend showed me the yogic pose called *The Corpse*, and it is a wonderful and relaxing pose. The complete relaxation of the bones is something very special. Using that experience, I developed the meditation.

It has helped me to sleep and to overcome worry. It has helped me to relax at a time of great tension and at times of great sorrow. This is also a way of centering on the great joys of Life. It is a meditation on what is, and a preparation for what is to come.

LIGHTENING UP

A RITUAL FOR THE GOD IN SAGITTARIUS

Creating Sacred Space:

Contrast the light and dark, summer and winter, growth and death. Think about Death and Life. Think about times when you finished something that began another thing. Think about circles and about life. You might want to decorate your area with symbols of light and celebration. Think about death and renewal.

Cast the Circle:

Carrying a candle or fire symbol, walk three times deosil around the circle chanting:

“By this fire the circle is cast.

Hold me sure and hold me fast.

Between the worlds of Light and Dark,

The circle is cast, the circle is cast.”

Summon the Guardians and the Elementals

Summon the East:

“Guardians of the Air, Light and Free, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the brightness of the dawn. Sylphs of the Air, Creatures of Magic, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the freedom of flying. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the South:

“Guardians of the Fire, Bright and Burning, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the revelation of the sun at noon. Salamanders, Creatures of Fire, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the fire of passion. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the West:

“Guardians of the Waters, Deep and Dark, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the solace of the heart. Undines, Creatures of Water, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the comfort of the heart. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the North:

“Guardians of the Earth, Dark and Loamy, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the peace of silence. Gnomes, Creatures of Earth, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the silence of the Dark. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the Goddess:

“Lovely Rhodos, swimming in the waters of Light and Dark, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the loving power of the heart and the deep understanding of emotions lived whole. Hail and welcome.”

Summon the God:

“Helios, riding magnificently across the skies, join me in my sacred circle. Bring the warmth of the sun, the fire of growth and the power of the solar world. Hail and welcome.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and then another deep breath. Take yet another deep breath and hold it. Let it out

with a tone. Take a fourth deep breath and then let it out with a single tone. Continue to breathe deeply and close your eyes.

You are a tree, standing at the edge of a forest. Feel the sap rise within you and fill your whole being. It fills you and heals you. Cast your awareness down to your feet and see that roots come off your toes and heels and move deeply into the Earth. Deeper and deeper. As your roots sink, you feel the warmth of the Mother and the embrace of Her love. Find a place and anchor yourself, firmly and flexibly enough for you to sway in the wind but still stay rooted. Bring the energy of the Earth up through your roots and see it move inside you and with your own sap. Cast your awareness up to your branches, standing high, reaching up to embrace the sky. Feel the Sun reach down and catch your embrace and feel the joy and love of the Sun. Stay there for a moment, grounded in the Mother and embraced by the Sun. Open your eyes, and you are back in your circle.

Statement of Ritual Intent:

“I am a creature of the Sun. I celebrate the Sun in the winter and the joy of new beginnings. I go to the God to explore the mystery of beginnings and endings and beginning again.”

Meditation:

Take a deep breath and then another. Breathe again, and keep breathing deeply, as you move deeply into yourself.

You are a mighty tree, mature and grown tall. Many creatures live in your branches and your bark. Feel your strength and your might....

Feel your union with the Sun and with the Earth. Feel the creatures living on you and inside of you....

Over time, your sap runs a little slower. Some of the creatures burrowing in your bark go a little too deep. Your bark does not renew. You live on, but it is a little harder now. Eventually, the insects burrowing into your bark, cause you to lose your bulk. Parts of you shrink. And you fall to the ground..

Tighten the muscles of your body and then relax them. Feel the tension leave your body. Relax. Relax. Cast your awareness up and down the trunk lying on the warmed forest floor. Feel the dampness of the ground connecting with your trunk. Relax. Your trunk begins to lose itself in the dampness of the Earth. Relax....

The Sun beats down on you, and you begin to move apart in a natural dance. Parts of the trunk are separating. Parts of the trunk begin to fall away. You relax again into the Earth. Relax....

The Earth begins to mingle with you. You move into the Earth. There is no difference between the tree and the Earth. You are relaxed and warmed. You stay there and the seasons change. It is autumn and leaves fall around you and into the soil that is you....

Winter comes and blankets you with snow, protecting you from the cold air. Relax. The snow melts and water quenches your thirst. Relax. Spring begins....

You begin to feel energy inside you. From your dispersed self, tiny shoots begin to grow....

They grow up...and up...and up. They burst through the soil and, as they surface, they are greeted by the sun. More tendrils shoot up, faster now, eager for the sun. Up and up, eager for the sun, energized by the warmth and joy of growth. You grow and grow. Your trunk begins to thicken and you grow straight and tall upward to the sun....

Helios, the Sun God, reaches down and embraces you. He holds you and whispers the wisdom of joy in your ears. Listen..

When it is time, take a deep breath and open your eyes. You are back in your circle, energized by the Sun and inspired by His words.

Raise the Cone of Power:

Move around your circle. Dance and feel the energy course through you. Chant the word sun over and over again until the energy moves up and out of the circle and into the Universe—whoosh—sealing the work you have done.

Cakes and Ale:

Hold the food and drink up to the assembled spirits and say, “Here between the worlds, held sure and fast on the love of the God and Goddess, bless this food and drink. Thank you for the joy of celebrations.”

Center and Ground:

Take a deep breath and you are a tree again. Move your awareness down to where your roots are anchored and gently release the anchor. Rest there a moment, feeling the love of the Mother Earth. Know that you can always go back. Pull your roots back into your feet and flex them a little. Move your awareness upward to your branches, to where you are embraced by the Sun. Gently move out of the embrace and know that you can always go back to the love of the Sun. Take three deep breaths, centering yourself and open your eyes. You are back in your circle.

Farewell to the God:

“Helios, Mighty Sun Who Sheds the Light on All, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Goddess:

“Sweet-Natured Nymph, Rhodos, swimming into my heart, thank You for Your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the Guardians and Elementals***Farewell to the North:***

“Guardians and Elementals of the North, the place of silence, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the West:

“Guardians and Elementals of the West, the place of the heart, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the South:

“Guardians and Elementals of the South, the place of passion, thank you for your presence in my sacred circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Farewell to the East:

“Guardians and Elementals of the East, the place of intellect, thank you for your presence in my sacred

circle. Go with my thanks and my blessings. Hail and farewell.”

Open the Circle:

With your fire symbol, move three times widdershins around the circle, chanting:

“Open the circle, wide and free.
Merry together, merry part.
Meet here again joyfully.
Blessed be, blessed be.”

CONCLUSION

THE ECSTASY OF THE GOD

We began in the cold of Capricorn, and in the depth of the Earth to explore the life of the God. From birth through Life to Death and beyond, we journeyed to understand the spirit of the God. The story of the God is told to us through the year and unfolds in the story of the seasons. As the seasons come and go, we see Him growing and dying. The God's story is a story of deep meaning and commitment, for He is committed to living this seasonal life in spite of its inevitability. There is no denial in the Life of the God. This sacred Life resonates with the Divine within us because it mirrors our human experience, our experience as divine beings.

The story of the seasons and the life of the God is a story of maturity. I talk comically (or at least I like to think I'm funny) about the difference between a guy and a man. Guys are the ones who drink beer and wear T-shirts that do not cover their belly. They belch, fart and scratch their private parts in public. They talk about important things, such as who is sexier, Betty Rubble or Wilma Flintstone? They are the ones who play their radio so loudly you can hear it half-a-block away.

There is a little bit of guy in every man. Men, however, are also deeply committed to the things they love, whether it is their family, their community their jobs or their spiritual path. Men are tender and caring. Sure, they may talk endlessly about cars, and other things of little interest to women, but they also will help women buy a car, help them fix a car, or give a woman a ride to the corner store. They are *engaged*. They pay attention to their lives, because they know the Sacred is in the here-and-now. Men live the life of the Sacred Masculine.

The life of the God may serve as a model of engaged and committed masculinity, but He is more than a mere model. He is the masculine part of us still wild and untamed. Both men and guys will howl at the moon and run with the wolves, but it is the Sacred Masculine that knows the story of the Sacred requires sacrifice, love and honor. The Sacred Masculine is sensual, fun, joyful, and sorrowful. The Sacred Masculine has that sweet, wild madness that fills our senses as we dance in ecstasy. We can embrace every moment as ecstatic union with the God. Every experience, every joy and every grief connects us to the world and to the Sacred.

We are wild.

We are God.

GLOSSARY

Aquarius: An air sign of the Zodiac—January 20-February 18—symbolized by a man bearing a water vessel.

Aries: A fire sign of the Zodiac—March 21-April 19—symbolized by a ram.

Athena: Greek Goddess of Wisdom.

Beltane: Neo-pagan and Wiccan holiday celebrated on May 1. Derived from the Celtic Wheel of the Year, this holiday celebrates love, exuberance and fertility.

Blessed Be: Used by neo-pagans and Wiccans and is used as a greeting or to correspond with “amen.”

Cancer: A water sign of the Zodiac—June 22-July 22—symbolized by a crab.

Capricorn: An earth sign of the Zodiac—December 22-January 19—symbolized by a goat.

Celebrant: A participant in ritual.

Centaur: In Greek and Roman myth, a creature with the head and torso of a human and the lower body of a horse. Thought to be creatures of great appetites and great intellect.

Center: A term used in ritual to calm the emotions and ready the celebrant for sacred work. This is accomplished by deep breathing and moving thought and attention to the center of the celebrants' being.

Cerridwen: Celtic Goddess of Education, Knowledge and Creativity. Considered a Goddess of Life, Death and Transformation.

Chiron: The wise centaur that taught many of the Greek heroes.

Circle: Ritual and worship in neo-pagan and Wiccan practice is done in a circle to symbolize the endless nature of the Divine. The term can also be used to refer to the group rather than using the word "coven."

Cone of Power: In ritual, energy is raised to sanctify and seal the work done in the ritual. The energy is raised and sent into the Universe with intent and the permission of the spirits present in the ritual.

Deosil: Literally "sun-wise," and is used to refer to the clockwise movement around the circle in ritual.

East: One of the four directions summoned during ritual. East symbolizes beginnings, dawn, intellect and learning. The East is symbolized by flying animals

and birds, clouds and corresponds with the element of Air.

Elementals: Magical creatures found on this plane of existence. Powerful, playful and amoral, these creatures symbolize the raw power of that element. Sylphs are air elementals, Salamanders are fire, Undines are water and Gnomes are earth elementals.

Evoked: A method of summoning spirits into a sacred circle. In particular, the God and Goddess are invited to join the circle of spirits and humans.

Faunus: Greek God of Agriculture and the Wild.

Flora: Greek Goddess of Flowers and Sexuality and the wife of Faunus.

Gemini: An air sign of the Zodiac—May 21-June 21—symbolized by human twin youths, usually male.

Gnomes: Elemental spirits of the earth. Gnomes are considered the most powerful of the earth elemental spirits.

Ground: The practice of connecting with the Earth, which stabilizes the celebrant when doing intense or magical work.

Guardians: The powerful spirit beings from other-world planes of existence. They are invited into the circle politely.

Helios: Greek God of the Sun.

Iris: Greek Goddess of the Rainbow.

Jana: Roman Goddess of the Moon and wife of Janus.

Jehova: Judeo-Christian God, the father aspect of God.

Janus: Roman God of Beginnings and Endings.

Laka: Hawaiian Goddess of the Hula.

Leo: A fire sign of the Zodiac—July 23-August 22—symbolized by a lion.

Libra: An air sign of the Zodiac—September 23-October 23—symbolized by the scales of justice.

Lono: Hawaiian God of Agriculture.

Mars: Roman God of Death and War.

Minerva: Roman Goddess of Wisdom.

Mystery: In spiritual and religious practices, the term used to describe the Unknown and our spiritual understanding of the Divine.

Neo-pagan: one of the umbrella terms for the multitude of Earth-based religions that have emerged in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including Druids, Goddess worshippers, Wiccans and others.

North: One of the four directions summoned in ritual. North symbolizes silence, death, contemplation, the body and sexuality. North corresponds with the element of earth and is symbolized by animals that burrow and dig, bear, wolf, mountains, rocks, and soil.

Pagan: Often used interchangeably with neo-pagan and is used as a designation for practitioners of Earth-based religions.

Pisces: A water sign of the Zodiac—February 19-March 20—symbolized by two fish swimming in a circle.

Prometheus: The Greek God who gave fire and enlightenment to humans and is eternally punished by Zeus, the King of the Olympian Gods.

Ritual: the form of worship, often free-formed, practiced by neo-pagans and Wiccans. The hallmark is that rituals are written and performed by the celebrants.

Sagittarius: A fire sign of the Zodiac—November 22-December 21—symbolized by a centaur with a bow and arrow.

Salamanders: The elemental spirit associated with fire. Does not look like a lizard.

Scorpio: A water sign of the Zodiac—October 24-November 21—symbolized by a scorpion.

Shekinah: The Sacred Feminine in the Hebrew religious tradition.

South: One of the four directions summoned into ritual. South symbolizes the will and the creative spirit. South corresponds with fire. South is symbolized by dragons and the phoenix.

Sylphs: The elemental spirit associated with air.

Taliesin: Bard to King Arthur and one of the greatest storytellers of all time.

Taurus: An earth sign of the Zodiac—April 20-May 20—that is symbolized by a bull.

Undines: The elemental spirit associated with water.

Virgo: An earth sign of the Zodiac—August 23-September 22—that is represented by a young woman.

West: One of the four directions summoned into circle. West symbolizes the emotions, sensuality, relationships and the heart. West corresponds with water. West is symbolized by mermaids, fish, and swimming creatures.

Widdershins: Moving counterclockwise around the circle. Used for banishing magic or for opening the circle at the end of ritual.

Zeus: A Greek God, King of the Olympian Gods.

Zodiac: The set of constellations through which the sun makes its journey throughout the calendar year.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, William and Clive Hicks. *Green Man: The Archetype of Our Oneness with the Earth*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Bolen, Jean Shinoda. *Gods in Every Man: A New Psychology of Men's Lives and Loves*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1989.

Conway, D. J. *Lord of Light and Shadow: The Many Faces of the God*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1997.

Davich, Victor. *The Best Guide to Meditation*. Los Angeles: Renaissance, 1998.

Drew, A. J. *Wicca for Men: A Handbook for Male Pagans Seeking a Spiritual Path*. New York: Citadel Press, 1998.

Drew, A. J. *Wicca Spellcraft for Men*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2001.

Farrar, Janet and Stewart. *The Witches God*. Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1989.

Encyclopedia Mythica. <http://www.pantheon.org>

Fields, Rick. *The Code of the Warrior in History and Everyday Life*. New York; Harper Perennial, 1991.

Gillette, Galen. *Book of Hours: Prayers to the Gods*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 2002.

Klein, Kenny. *The Flowering Rod: Men, Sex and Spirituality*. Oak Park, IL: Delphi Press, 1993.

Lawlor, Robert. *Earth Honoring: The New Male Sexuality*. London: Inner Traditions, 1989.

Mann, Nicholas R. *The Dark God: A Personal Journey Through the Underworld*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1996.

Marks, Theun. *The Quest for Maleness*. Capetown, South Africa: Lionhart Pub., 1999.

Matthews, John. *Choirs of the God: Revisioning Masculinity*. London: Mandala, 1991.

Matthews, John. *The Green Man: Quest for Nature*. Boston: Red Wheel, 2002.

O'Hara, Gwydion. *Sun Lore: Folktales and Sagas from Around the World*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1997.

Pennick, Nigel and Helen Field. *The God Year: Festival Days of the Sacred Male*. Cherverly, Berks, England: Capall Benn Publishing, 1998.

Richardson, Alan. *Earth God Rising: The Return of Men's Mysteries*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1990.

Starch, Marcia. *The Dark God: Exploring the Male Shadow*. Santa Fe, NM: Earth Medicine Books, 1995.

Trobe, Kala. *Invoke the Gods: Exploring the Power of Male Archetypes*. St. Paul: Llewellyn, 2001.

Warren-Clark, Ly and Kathryn Matthews. *The Way of Merlyn: The Male Path of Wicca*. Garden City, NY: Prism-Unity, 1990.

INDEX

Aquarius, 15, 31, 54-55, 57,
Aries, 15, 75-77, 106, 109
Athena, 101-102, 118, 120, 124
Cancer, 15, 32, 105, 108
Capricorn, 14, 32, 45-46, 48, 155, 165
Celebrant, 10, 13, 28, 30-31, 33, 87
Centaur, 97
Cerridwen, 65-66, 69, 73
Chiron, 97, 100-103
Circle, 10, 13, 22-23, 29-31, 33, 35, 39, 42-44, 48-50, 52-
53, 57, 59-63, 67-69, 71-74, 78-79, 81, 83, 88-91, 93-
95, 98-104, 109-114, 119-123, 125, 129-130, 132,
134, 138-139, 142-144, 147, 149, 152-154, 158-164
Dark, 18-19, 24, 39-40, 44, 49, 51, 56, 58-59, 72-75, 78,
82, 89, 91-92, 99, 110-112, 126-127, 135, 141, 148,
150, 155, 158-159
Deosil, 17, 31, 37, 67, 98, 102, 109, 119, 129, 138, 158
Dream, 5, 27, 63, 71, 117, 119-123, 141, 148
East, 10, 20, 31, 38, 40-42, 44, 49, 53, 57, 62, 68, 73, 78,
83, 86, 88, 94, 99, 101, 103-104, 109, 111, 114, 119,
125, 129, 134, 138, 143, 154, 158, 164-165, 169
Father, 9, 12, 15, 25, 33, 49, 53, 76, 105, 113, 120, 124,
140, 156, 170
Faunus, 55, 58, 60-61, 169

- Flora, 56, 58, 61-62, 169
 Gawain, 156
 Gemini, 15, 31, 95-98, 169
 Gnomes, 32, 38, 43, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 82, 89,
 99, 110, 120, 124, 130, 139, 148, 159, 169
 Ground, 18, 22-23, 25, 29, 33-35, 37, 39-40, 50, 52
 55, 59, 61, 63, 69-70, 72, 77, 81-82, 85, 90, 93,
 100, 102, 107, 110, 111, 113, 121, 130, 133, 140,
 142, 149, 151, 160-162, 169
 Helios, 39, 43, 57, 159, 162-163, 170
 Iris, 39, 43, 170
 Jana, 47, 50, 52, 170
 Janus, 47, 50, 52, 170
 Jehova, 17, 107, 109-110, 113, 170
 Laka, 86, 89, 94, 170
 Leo, 15, 32, 116-117, 119, 170
 Libra, 16, 31, 96, 135-136, 138, 170
 Lono, 86-87, 93-93, 170
 Lover, 9, 12, 15, 25, 38, 91, 139
 Male, 9, 12-13, 17, 18, 24-25, 40, 85, 95, 117, 169, 173-
 175
 Mars, 76, 79-80, 82, 170
 Mastery, 21, 77
 Meditation, 10-11, 13-14, 16, 26-27, 33-34, 40, 42, 51,
 59, 70, 86-87, 90, 101, 107-108, 111, 122, 131,
 140, 150, 157, 160
 Minerva, 79, 82, 170
 North, 31-32, 38, 41-43, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 82,
 89, 94, 99, 103, 113, 120, 124, 130, 133, 135, 139,
 143, 148, 153, 159, 163, 171
 Pagan, 9-11, 18-19, 22, 24, 28-29, 45, 54, 76-77, 87,
 167-168, 170-171, 173
 Pisces, 15, 32, 63-64, 67, 171
 Priest, 10, 12-13, 22-25, 28, 87

- Rasnu, 137, 139, 143
Rhiannon, 149-150, 153
Rhodos, 157, 159, 163
Ritual, 10-12, 14, 16-18, 22-37, 40, 47-48, 50, 56-57, 59, 66-67, 70, 77, 80, 86-88, 90, 97-98 101, 108-109, 111-113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 128, 131, 136, 138, 140, 146-147, 149, 157-158, 160, 166, 168-170, 173-174
Sacred Masculine, 14, 16, 26, 36, 45, 54, 56, 75, 105, 116-117, 135, 144, 166
Sagittarius, 16, 32, 155, 158, 171
Salamanders, 32, 38, 44, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 83, 89, 99, 109, 120, 124, 129, 139, 148, 159, 169, 171
Scorpio, 16, 32, 144, 147, 155, 172
Shakti, 127-128, 130, 133
Shekinah, 109-110, 113, 172
Shiva, 127-128, 130, 132-133
South, 31-32, 38, 40-42, 44, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 83, 88, 94, 99, 104, 109, 114, 120, 124, 129, 133, 139, 143, 148, 154, 159, 163, 172, 174
Sun, 10, 12, 14, 16-20, 23, 28, 32, 36, 45, 48-52, 70, 72, 74, 84, 86, 88-90, 92-93, 100-101, 105, 111-113, 131-133, 140, 142, 148-149, 153, 156-157, 159-163, 169-170, 173-174
Sylphs, 32, 38, 44, 49, 53, 57, 62, 68, 73, 78, 83, 88, 99, 109, 120, 125, 129, 139, 148, 159, 169, 172
Taliesin, 64, 66, 69, 72, 172
Taurus, 15, 32, 84, 85, 87, 172
Undines, 32, 38, 43, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 82, 89, 99, 110, 120, 124, 129, 139, 148, 159, 169, 172
Virgo, 15, 32, 126-128, 172
West, 17, 20, 31-32, 38, 41, 43, 49, 53, 58, 62, 68, 73, 78, 82, 92, 94, 99, 103, 110, 113, 120, 124, 129, 133, 139, 141-142, 148, 153, 159, 163, 172

Wicca, 11-12, 19, 29-31, 167-168, 171, 173, 175
Widdershins, 36, 44, 53, 62, 74, 94, 104, 114, 125, 134,
143, 154, 164, 172
Wild, 11, 15, 17-18, 20-21, 39, 42, 54, 61, 84, 100, 146,
151, 166, 169

HOW TO BOOKS AND SHAMANIC GUIDES



Drawing the Three of Coins: How to Open & Run a Pagan Store

By Terri Paajenen

Doesn't everyone of us want to start our own witchy, pagan, metaphysical, or New Age shop? Here's advice from someone who has!

Gift of the Dreamtime: Awakening to the Divinity of Trauma

By S. Kelley Harrell

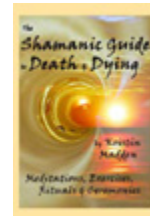
Exploring her past as an incest survivor, her bouts with depression, and crippling inability to pursue her dreams, the author uses shamanic practices rooted in Native American, Celtic, and Aboriginal culture. Combines her personal journey with instructions for similar meditations to help the injured child in all of us look at the hurt, understand it in a spiritual context, and forgive both ourselves and others.



The Shamanic Guide to Death & Dying: Meditations, Exercises, Rituals, & Ceremonies

By Kristin Madden

Journeys of a shamanic "Deathwalker" who assists the dying, the dead, and the grieving.

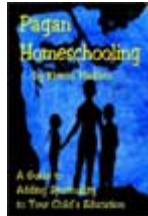


A Witch's Diary: Lessons for the Advanced Student

by Lady Lilith

Part Book of Shadows, part diary, part guide for leading your first coven, this book offers lessons for the advanced student.

PAGAN CHILDREN



**Pagan Homeschooling:
Adding Spirituality to Your Child's Education**

By Kristin Madden

Spiritual, magical, and emotional development of the child, from conception to adolescence. Includes games, activities, rituals, and meditations. Expanded and revised edition.

**Pagan Parenting (REVISED):
Spiritual, Magical, and Emotional Development**

By Kristin Madden

300 pages packed with tips, quizzes, crafts, and rituals for the home-schooled child as well as any child growing up in a pagan environment.



Pelzmantel: A Medieval Tale

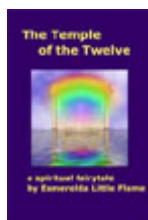
By K. A. Laity

The Grimm Brother's "Allerleirau" is retold from the viewpoint of the princess' caretaker, a crone who infuses the story with tales from medieval Ireland and Scandinavia, herbal cures, and magick. Extensively researched.

If Mermaids Could Dance

By Lady Lilith

19 original tales and myths about Goddesses, fairies, witches, and mermaids. Includes spells and charms from the author's personal Book of Shadows. Ideal to read to children.



The Temple of the Twelve: Novice of Colors

By Esmerelda Little Flame

A spiritual fairytale using colors as Gods and Goddesses, each teaching the young priestess a vital lesson.

PAGAN FICTION



Dream of the Circle of Women

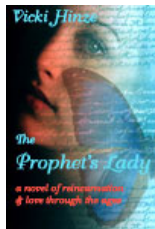
By Dahti Blanchard

Can the daughter of a witch find answers to long-hidden mysteries—including her mother's death—before she loses her own life?

Flying By Night:

By Lorna Tedder

A polyamorous witch is accused of murdering her two husbands and must flee an ancient enemy as well as a burned out detective who will lose everything in the process of finding her—and himself.



The Prophet's Lady: A Novel of Reincarnation & Love

By Vicki Hinze

Previously published by Kensington as *Maybe This Time*, this is a spiritual romance of reincarnation and getting it right.

Witch Moon Rising

By Maggie Shayne



Witch Moon Waning

By Lorna Tedder

Wiccan women face questions of love and ethics in 2 short novels. Includes 40+ spells, rituals, charms from the authors' personal Books of Shadows.

A Reverence for Trees

by Lorna Tedder

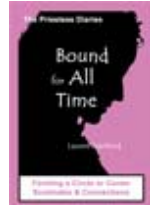
A love story about healing and forgiveness.
Read it FREE at www.spilledcandy.com/



THE PRIESTESS DIARIES



The Archangel's Return: Angels, Protection Rituals, Entities, Spirit Guides
Read it FREE at www.spilledcandy.com!



Bound for All Time: Handfasting/Spiritual Blending Ritual
Read it FREE at www.spilledcandy.com!



Drink of Me: Science / Magick Theory, Visions, Rituals for Clarity and Prosperity



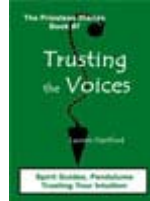
An Interference of Angels: Astrology, Visions, Fighting Manipulative Magick

Flying with Scissors: Forming a Circle or Coven, Soulmates and Twin Flames



Heat Beneath My Winter: Crystal Healings, Energy Healings, Coven Dynamics

This Sadness Shall Pass: Medical Empathy, Chakras, Energy Healings, & Crystals



News from the Ether: Spirit Guides, Channelings, Possessions, & Ouija Sessions

Trusting the Voices: Spirit Guides, Pendulums, Trusting Your Intuition

A Wicked Twist of Fate: Astral Projection, Visions, & Fate vs Free Will



BY LAUREN HARTFORD

Lauren's Hartford's ongoing series, *The Priestess Diaries*, features combined novelized diaries of several High Priestesses, each book emphasizing certain spiritual techniques and lessons in story format, with an overarching romantic subplot, intrigue, mystery, suspense, humor, and heartache.

Look for extended excerpts presented as free ebooks at our website.



A Banishment of Devils: Ouija Sessions, Past Lives, Atlantis, & Banishings

Giving It To the Gods: Coven Dynamics, Higher Selves, & Letting Go



The Indigo Promise: Indigo Children, Earth Changes, & Time Shifts

Return of the Archangel: Angels, Entities, Spirit Guides, Protection Rituals



The Key to Hell's Gate: Pleiadeans & The Notalalns, Astral Healing, Discerning Good Mediums from Bad

A Wedding of Souls: Spiritual Unions, Handfastings, Initiations



Guardian of the Portals: Interdimensional Portals, Interpretation of Dark and Light

She Who Feeds on Grief: Ethics of Magick, Psychic Vampires, Altering Outcomes



