

Lughnasadh

The following is a Special Order of Worship for the Fall Equinox. The chalice will be filled with the *waters-of-life*. The sacrifice should be of branches with turning leaves.

The service starts with all participants standing some distance away from the area where the ritual is to take place. If both safe and legal, a fire should be started in or near the altar. The Druid/ess who is presiding (usually, though not always, the Grove's Archdruid/ess) should already have cut the sacrifice and have it tucked into his or her robe (or it may be held in one hand). The presiding Druid/ess may choose to speak the opening Invocation to Be'al alone, or may ask the Preceptor and/or the People (depending on local Grove custom) to join in speaking the alternating lines in *italic print*.

Invocation

D: O Lord, overlook these three errors that are due to our human limitations: Thou art everywhere,

P: *But we worship Thee here;*

D: Thou art without form,

P: *But we worship Thee in these forms;*

D: Thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices,

P: *Yet we offer Thee these prayers and sacrifices.*

D: O Lord, overlook these three errors that are due to our human limitations.

P: *O Mother, cleanse our minds and hearts and prepare us for meditation.*

Procession

Here occurs the Procession, often with the Grove singing this hymn from *Customs 2:1-3*:

O Earth-Mother! We praise thee
that seed springeth,
that flower openeth,
that grass waveth.

We praise thee for winds that whisper
Through the graceful elm,
through the shapely maple,
through the lively pine,
through the shining birch,
through the mighty oak.

We praise thee for all things,
O Earth-Mother,
Who givest Life.

Upon arrival near the altar, the Preceptor and the Server use their staves to mark the Druid Sigil upon the ground in front of the altar (usually on the South side), leaving the bottom of the circle incomplete. The Druid/ess steps into this Sigil, which is then closed by the two staves.

Praise

Here an Incantation, Poem, or Hymn of praise is recited or sung by the Druid/ess, the Bard(s) or the entire Grove.

Sacrifice

The Druid/ess holds up the sacrifice to the sky, while saying:

D: Our praise has mounted up to Thee on the wings of eagles;
our voices have been carried up to Thee on the shoulders of
the winds. Hear now, we pray Thee, our Mother, as we offer
up this sacrifice of life. Accept it, we pray Thee, and cleanse
our hearts, granting us Thy peace and life.

The sacrifice is laid upon the altar or in the fire. The Druid/ess
then turns to the Four Quarters and asks:

D: Hast Thou accepted our sacrifice, O our Mother? I call upon
the Spirit of the North to give answer.... of the South.... of the
East... of the West...

Reply

If the sacrifice is accepted, the Service continues; otherwise, the
Service is ended immediately.

D: Praise be! Our sacrifice, dedicated to the fertility and renewal
of life, and to the cleansing of our minds and hearts, has been
accepted!

Chant

D: The Sun-God did spend half the year with His children in the
North and then did depart to His winter home.

O Belenos, O Thou unchanging God of many names but one
Face, we, Thy children, mourn Thy passing from our lands.

E: O LORD OF LIGHT, RETURN TO US SOON.

D: O Belenos, O Lord of Light, short seems the time that we
have rejoiced in the warmth of Thy presence.

E: O GOD OF THE SUN, RETURN TO US SOON.

D: The nights were short, the trees in leaf,

E: THE DAY HAD CONQUERED NIGHT.

D: The days were long and full of Life.

E: THE DAY HAD CONQUERED NIGHT.

D: The Sun was warm, the land gave fruit,

E: THE DAY HAD CONQUERED NIGHT.

D: But the Sun must return to the Southern lands,

E: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

D: Though the world is warm and full of life,

E: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

D: Yet the cold approaches to stalk the land,

E: BALANCED NOW ARE WE.

D: The Sun grows weaker every day.

E: THE NIGHT WILL CONQUER DAY.

D: The leaves will wither and Death draws nigh,

E: THE NIGHT WILL CONQUER DAY.

D: We pray Thy return with all our might,

E: THE NIGHT WILL CONQUER DAY.

D: O Belenos, O Sun, we mourn Thy passing from our midst.
Welcome wert Thou among us.

E: THOU BLESSED US WITH THY PRESENCE, O LORD
OF LIGHT.

D: O Belenos, O Lord of Light, return to us soon that we may
rejoice in Thy sight.

E: BLESS US AND LIGHT OUR WAYS, O GOD OF THE
SUN.

D: But winter will pass and spring will come,
E: AND THE DAY WILL CONQUER NIGHT.
D: The Sun will return and warm our land,
E: AND THE DAY WILL CONQUER NIGHT.
D: Dath will pass and Life return,
E: AND THE DAY WILL CONQUER NIGHT.

D: O Belenos, O Sun-God, O Lord of Light, though Thy
presence departs from us, yet art Thou with us, for Thy light
does guide our feet and Thy warmth is in our hearts.

E: ALL HAIL BELENOS, GOD OF LIGHT!
D: All praise Belenos, who keep His ways.
E: O BELENOS, WE PRAISE THEE!

Catechism

D: Of what does the Earth-Mother give that we may know the
continual flow and renewal of life?
P: *The waters-of-life.*
D: From whence do these waters flow?
P: *From the bosom of the Earth-Mother, the never-changing All-
Mother.*
D: And how do we honor this gift that causes life?
P: *By partaking of the waters-of-life.*
D: Has the Earth-Mother given forth of Her bounty?
P: *She has!*
D: Does Belenos still give us a sign of His presence?
P: *He does! Though He departs for the Southern lands, still is
His spark of light within these waters-of-life.*
D: Then give me the waters!

Consecration

The Druid/ess takes the chalice from the Server, who fills it if it is not already full. The Druid/ess then consecrates its contents with the following:

D: O Belenos, O Lord of Light, descend yet once more into these
waters and fill them with Thy presence. Give us to know, O
Lord, of Thy impending return, as we take and drink one
more time of Thy warmth and light.

Ordination?

If a member of the Grove is to be ordained to the Second Order (in which case the Druid/ess will have consecrated a second chalice, filled with the *waters-of-life*) the ceremony is inserted here, before the Communion.

Communion

The Druid/ess drinks from the chalice and blesses the Preceptor with the words “the *waters-of-life*” and the marking of the Druid Sigil in the air.

The Preceptor returns the blessing and receives the chalice from the Druid/ess. The Preceptor drinks, blesses the Server, is blessed in return, and gives the Server the chalice. The Server drinks, then goes around the circle of the Grove (usually clockwise) blessing each person, handing them the chalice, letting them drink, being blessed in return, and taking the chalice to the next person. The Server does NOT drink more than once.

In some Groves, the Druid/ess may merely turn to the left and exchange blessings with the person on that side, letting the chalice be handed around the circle by the members of the Grove.

In either method, the last person in the circle should NOT finish the contents of the chalice. This is returned to the Druid/ess with a last exchange of blessings. Then the Druid/ess takes the last sip, pouring the remainder upon the altar or fire, saying:

D: To Thee we return this portion of Thy bounty, O our Mother, even as we must return to Thee.

Meditation

Here follows an appropriate reading, from any Nature-oriented scripture the Druid/ess may choose, read by the Druid/ess or by someone appointed for that purpose. After this comes a few BRIEF words of meditation from the Druid/ess and a period of silence and private meditation (usually two or three minutes in length, though longer with some Groves) by all. Eventually, the Druid/ess signals the end of the service with:

Benediction

D: Go forth into the world, secure in the knowledge that our sacrifice has found acceptance in the Earth-Mother's sight, that She has answered our prayer, and that we go forth with Her blessing:

The Druid/ess blesses the Grove with three Sigils in the air, left to right, saying:

D: Peace! Peace! Peace!