

## Winter Solstice

The following is a Special Order of Worship for the Winter Solstice. The chalice will be filled with the *waters-of-sleep*. The sacrifice should be of evergreen boughs and mistletoe.

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

The sacrifice is not accepted!

D: The four winds are silent; the Earth-mother sleeps.

## Chant

D: Belenos halts his outward flight,

E: AND TURNS TO US TODAY.

D: The shortest day, the longest night,

E: HE TURNS TO US TODAY.

D: So let us rejoice in his sight,

E: FOR HE TURNS TO US TODAY.

D: O Belenos, to Thee we pray,

E: SMILE ON US TODAY.

D: O look on us who keep Thy ways,

E: AND SMILE ON US ALWAYS.

D: Thou art in our hearts, though far away,

E: SMILE WITH US TODAY!

D: O Belenos, Who givest light,  
O Belenos, Who givest life,  
We rejoice at Thy turning,  
A sign of life to us returning,  
To Thee all praise, O Lord of Light,  
Thou Who takest away the night,  
Thou Who givest life to land,  
And warmth and joy unto Man.

E: O BELENOS, WE PRAISE THEE!

*At this point, a special Chant to Tarania or other Thunder  
Gods may be inserted.*

## 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: Has the Earth-Mother given forth of Her bounty?

P: *She has not! The waters are here, but the spirit has gone out  
of them.*

D: Of what, then, do we partake?

P: *The waters-of-sleep.*

D: Then give me the waters-of-sleep!

## 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 Dalon Ap Landu, descend once again into these waters, and hallow them. Give us to know Thy power and the promise of life that is to return.

## Communion

The Druid/ess drinks from the chalice and blesses the Preceptor with the words “the *waters-of-sleep*” 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 prayers will be answered, that the bounty of life will return to the face of the Earth, and then will the Earth-mother shower Her blessings upon you:

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

D: Peace!                      Peace!                      Peace!