

WINTER SOLSTICE/YULE/MOTRANACHT '07

with Treibh na Tintean (try-v na tin-tawn)

CLEANSING & MEDITATION - Mike

CHANT/DANCE TO THE CIRCLE – “Earth Our Body, Water Our Blood, Air Our Breath and Fire Our Spirit”

DIRECTIONS –

North: Spirits of North, Powers of Earth, with your gifts of sustenance and life, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Earth that is Her body, send forth your strength and bless us with your presence! So mote it be.

East: Spirits of East, Powers of Air, with your gifts of light and clarity, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Air that is Her breath, send forth your inspiration and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

South: Spirits of South, Powers of Fire, with your gifts of passion and love, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Fire that is Her spirit, send forth your flame and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

West: Spirits of West, Powers of Water, with your gifts of depth and feeling, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Water that is Her blood, send forth your healing and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

Spirit: Power of Spirit, with your gift of centering and movement, we hail and invite you to join our circle. Under stone and bone, in the earth to await rebirth, we open our hearts to the return of the Light! So mote it be!

COVENANT - (all) As we gather here in our sacred space, a circle is formed and we are connected in spirit.

(ring bell) INVOCATION – (East) Queen of Heaven, Mother of all, hear us as our voices call. Send Your fire back to Earth as we will the Sun’s rebirth. Sacred fire, kindled bright, lead us back into the light.

(West) Boy Child of Promise, come to us out of the tomb, out of the womb. While our candles burn, let Your Light return!

(ring bell) East: The Winter Solstice is the time of people’s rebirth from darkness.

South: The old sun dies and the Goddess rebirths the new sun with a new year.

West: Motranacht celebrates the birth of all the nights of the year.

North: Persephone leaves Hecate in the underworld and is reborn to Demeter.

East: The Oak King defeats the Holly King in battle.

South: Yemaya creates the world anew again from her fertile womb.

West: Light comes from darkness, growth comes from barrenness.

North: Spring comes from the depths of Winter.

All: We are here to bring light to the world.

(ring bell) East: *(light a white taper)* This candle represents the life force of our Goddess. From her the light of the Sun is birthed into the world. Tonight we celebrate the longest night of the year. Even though it is winter, our darkness will end. Life seems to be slumbering around us, but we are not forgotten. The blessed Goddess carries in her womb her son, her consort, our God.... Blessed Lady, turn the Wheel so that your Son will return to warm us anew!

All: Blessed be the Lady, giver of life; welcome Lord, bringer of warmth!

West: Tonight darkness has reached the limit of its power. Now the light of our God is victorious over darkness. *(Light other taper from Goddess candle, then set on altar.)*

East & West: Tonight our God is born.

All: Blessed be the Lady, giver of life; Welcome the God, Lord of light!

East: *(E and W hold flames of Goddess & God candles together)* Tonight Goddess and God are reconciled. Together these children set out on their journey through the eternal year.

West: Together they will bring life anew to our barren-seeming earth.

All: Blessed be the Goddess and God, blessed be creation, blessed be the darkness, blessed be the light!

([ring bell] Maiden, Mother and Crone now come forward to light the Yule log. East hands the Maiden the Goddess candle.)

Maiden: Blessed be the Maiden, the young Goddess, wide-eyed and eager, innocent and fresh *(lights the white candle and then hands the Goddess candle to the Mother)*.

Mother: Blessed be the Mother, loving and protective, proud and fertile *(lights the red candle and then hands the Goddess candle to the Crone)*.

Crone: Blessed be the Crone, powerful and wise, guardian of the great cauldron of death, life and rebirth *(lights the black candle then hands the Goddess candle to East)*.

(The three Goddess aspects then dip their right hands into the cauldron filled with full-moon water with sea salt. They walk around the circle touching each convenor as they pass. Maiden blesses the feet, Mother the stomach, Crone the forehead. When finished, return to circle.)

All: May the log burn, may the wheel turn, may evil spurn, may the Sun return. So mote it be!

(ring bell) *(East & West extend the covenors to edges of lighted circle.)*

BATTLE OF THE HOLLY AND OAK KINGS – *(who will win?☺)*

Oak King: I am the Oak King, God of the Waxing Year. Fear not! For I have come again to guide you on to summer and all its blessings.

All: Hail the Oak King!

East: The Holly King is slain, the Oak King reigns, our Goddess is young once more.

West: A new young God is born to us. On the darkest night of winter, we turn to the light and we say...

All: Blessed be!

(ring bell) **COMMUNION** - pass the chalice and the bowl with the words, "Welcome the ReBorn Sun!"

(ring bell) **THANKING THE DARKNESS** – **(North and South)** The darkness is still here. Hold your hand upon your chest--know that darkness will always be within. It is a darkness of rest; a darkness of promise; a darkness of gestation; a darkness of yet-to-be, of just-before. Do not rush it away so quickly. Take time.

(ring bell) **THANKING THE DIRECTIONS** –

North: Spirits of North, Powers of Earth, thank you for your gifts of sustenance and for blessing our circle. By the Earth that is Her body, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

East: Spirits of East, Powers of Air, thank you for your gifts of clarity and for blessing our circle. By the Air that is Her breath, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

South: Spirits of South, Powers of Fire, thank you for your gifts of passion and for blessing our circle. By the Fire that is Her spirit, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

West: Spirits of West, Powers of Water, thank you for your gifts of feeling and for blessing our circle. By the Water that is Her blood, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

All: The circle is open, but unbroken. Merry meet and merry part, and merry meet again!

Yule/Winter Solstice/ Motranacht

Oddly enough, the Christian usurping of Yule has an advantage, says Angie B, it preserved many of the ancient customs that might have otherwise been lost. “We are well aware,” she says, “that the Christmas holiday takes its forms and meaning from our ancient Pagan practices: virgin births, festive lights, decorated trees, wreaths and bells, fires and feasting are all at the heart of the Pagan Yule observance.”

When the Wheel of the year turns to Yule, the God who died at Samhain is reborn of the Virgin Goddess. The God is the Divine Child represented by the Sun returning after this the darkest night of the year to bring us warmth and fertility. The days grow longer and lighter again. Our ancestors lit candles and Yule logs as acts of magic to remind the Sun to return and to honor the Goddess who gives

Him birth. The Child is also the Oak King, whose reign begins at the Solstice. The Oak King “defeats” the Holly King in battle; the Holly King will once again reign at the Summer Solstice where he will “defeat” the Oak King. Tonight, our Oak and Holly Kings will battle during the celebration, and hopefully the Oak King will win!

Because this yearly Yule observance of the Winter Solstice was so important to our ancestors, the early Church was forced to move its “Christmas” celebration from August to December; so now many people celebrate another god born of a virgin mother.

Tied into all of these traditions is the feast of Mithras, another Divine Child. On December 25th, the ancients from Persia to Roman Britain celebrated the birth of Mithras by focusing on meditation and spiritual initiation. At the darkest time of the year, these people celebrated as well the birth of the divine child within the soul of each initiate. The idea was to rejoice in the hope of our own continual rebirth. Many of the early Christian churches in Britain were deliberately built on the sites of temples formerly dedicated to the worship of Mithras; here we have more of that irony that preserved the feast of the Divine Child’s birth for us. We can use this season to tune into and celebrate the seasonal silence from which we are reborn every year.

With all these Divine babies being born, it’s also quite obvious that we need to celebrate the child within us all! Many winter holiday traditions—hanging the wreath, giving gifts, putting up a tree, ringing bells, decorating with bay and bayberry candles along with holly and mistletoe—are done primarily to help the children understand the season.

The Yule log is doubly representative for us—many families did not celebrate the Solstice outside b/c it was too cold (depending on the latitude!). This is why the Yule log (a phallic symbol usually cut from the God-Oak tree) was used instead of the traditional bonfire. We are lucky enough to be able to celebrate outside most of the year, so our Yule log balances the God and Goddess by virtue of the Maiden/Mother/Crone candles decorating the log.

This brings me to another important tradition, as Asatru celebration called Motranacht—Mother’s Night or Mother of Nights, celebrated on the Solstice. This was the primary holy day of the year, Yule took place after the Motranacht ritual. Some Northern tribes saw this as the night from which all other nights were born; others saw it as a night to celebrate and honor the “disir,” or maternal ancestors. It was celebrated with a night-long vigil to honor the disir, a Yule log, a Disilblot (feast!). The Yule log was lit from the last year’s to assure continuity with the family line and was kept burning twelve nights. This practice was referred to as “keeping the same fire.”