

Winter Solstice/Yule '14 with Treibh na Tíntean

[Begin inside.]

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON [Dave] – The Winter Solstice signifies rebirth within darkness. Over the longest night, the Goddess gives birth to the Child of Light—the new Sun God. Long ago, people lit candles and fires to lure back the sun. Through the dark times, the earth sleeps—a wintry death shrouds the world; but, as the days grow longer, the Goddess will awaken the world around us.

In Celtic lore, Yule is when the Oak King triumphs over the Holly King bringing rebirth. The Yule season brings tidings of comfort, joy and new life; however, the Celts didn't celebrate Yule until the coming of the Saxons. "Yule" meant "Wheel"—an important symbol of the Goddess' cycle. Wreaths were used to represent Her endless turning, Her wheel of the year.

To the Celts and Druids, the evergreen was also important to the celebration. The Yule tree represents Her immortality. Other Pagans would bring a live tree into the home for the wood spirits. Bells were hung on the branches, along with treats for the spirits, and a five-pointed star (the pentagram) was placed on top. Celts and Druids also burned an oak Yule log in the fire to celebrate the newborn Sun. *[We can pass around some blessing oil for the cleansing during this, eh?]*

THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT – *[Large unlit Fairy candle in the center, folks in a circle around it, should be as dark as we can make it.]*

Scott: *[Ring the bell]* To die and be reborn, the Wheel is turning. What must you lose to the night?

[plant]: Fear.

Scott: Fear is lost to the night.... Saying it makes it real, "Fear...".

All: Fear is lost to the night.

Scott: The Wheel is turning. What must you lose to the night?

[Say things like "sadness," etc. Keep going until we are done "losing." Each time, all repeat, "_____ is lost to the night."]

Scott: We who are Pagan know the value of the night; we know that not all growth takes place in the sunshine. But as the Wheel turns, we are awake in the night; we turn the Wheel to bring back the light. We are awake in the night; we turn the Wheel to bring the light. *[Start the chant, let go on for a bit as Kate and Erin pass out candles. "We are awake in the night; we turn the Wheel to bring the light."]*

Sandy: Even now, the seed of light is being born within the womb of darkness. The seed is awakening! Now, let's each make three wishes: one for yourself, one for another, and one for the planet.

[Kate and Erin goes to Rita {who is standing next to Melissa and Alyssa} and lights her candle. Rita makes her wishes, then turns to light Melissa's candle and she makes her wishes.... Soon the whole circle will be lit!]

Denise: The circle is cast! Let's extend this circle of light outside to Covenant Woods by a freeform chant—like toning. Turn to the north and push the blessing out. *[Begin the chant—"om" or "ah," whatever! You call when you think we are finished.]*

PROCESSION TO WOODS *[I like the idea of simply chanting, "we are awake in the night" on the way to the circle.]*

CALLING THE DIRECTIONS

Richard: *[Ring the bell.]* Our circle is already cast; let us invite the Watchtowers.

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 Spirits of above and below, with your gift of centering and movement, we hail and invite you to join our circle. Under stone and bone, into 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.

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!

North: 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.

Spirit: 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.

All Directions: Spring comes from the depths of Winter.

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

ACCEPTING THE GODDESS ASPECTS *[Ring bell.]*

Sandy: *[Signal to Jenna, Denise, Rita, Melissa and Alyssa. Join hands in small circle.]*

Rita, Melissa and Alyssa—close your eyes. Feel the circle that we have created, feel your tribe around you, feel the circle around the world's spirit. Accept the energies of these three as you accept the aspects of the Goddess. Open your eyes as the Maiden, Mother and Crone. *[Rejoin larger circle.]*

Scott: *[Signal to Dave, Richard and Mark {or one of r-o-p guys}. Join hands in small circle.]* Close your eyes. Feel the void of darkness around us, look to your center and see the energies of the God join in you. When you feel the Goddess near, take her hand. Open your eyes as the Oak King reborn. *[Rejoin the larger circle.]*

YULE LOG, BIRTH OF THE GOD & BLESSING – *[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].* *[Ring bell.]*

Mother: Blessed be the Mother, loving and protective, proud and fertile *[Lights the red candle and then hands the Goddess candle to the Crone].* *[Ring bell.]*

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].* *[Ring bell.]*

East: In the hour of the witch, the night is dark and black as pitch.

South: The Wheel turns, the wreath is laid. *[Rita lays wreath over the God candle.]*

West: The Goddess gathers the seed this day. *[Alyssa lays mistletoe upon the wreath.]*

North: With the coming of the light, rejoice at the rebirth of the Oak King this night! *[Melissa lights the God candle.]*

All: We ask the God to return—return, oh, return, God of the Light, return! Darkness flees. Return, return!

Oak King: *[Mark or whomever steps forward.]* I am the Oak King, God of the Waxing Year. Fear not! I have come again to guide you on to summer and all its blessings! *[Ring bell.]*

Spirit Thing 1: The Holly King is slain, the Oak King reigns, our Goddess is young once

more.

Spirit Thing 2: A new, young God is born to us. On the darkest night of winter, we turn to the light and say...

All: Hail the Oak King! Blessed be! *[Ring bell.]*

[The three Goddess aspects then dip their right hands into the cauldron filled with full-moon water with sea salt. They turn and face the circle, each stepping forward in turn.]

Oak King: On this night renew yourselves to the Goddess and the God as we bless you and renew the world around you. So mote it be!

Alyssa: Hold forth your hands—I the Goddess Maiden bestow blessing of health to your bodies.

Melissa: Place your hands upon your chest—I the Goddess Mother bestow blessings of strength to your spirit.

Rita: Touch a finger to your forehead—I the Goddess Crone bestow blessings of wisdom to your minds.

All: We receive your blessings and bless you in return as you renew us and our world. So mote it be! *[Ring bell.]*

YULE RUNE READING – *[Sha brings bag or bowl of runes to the Oak King. He pulls one and gives it to her. She reads it and relates it to the return of the light!]*

COMMUNION *[Sandy and Jenna chant, "the light was born, the light has died." Scott and Dave start after them and chant, "everything passes, all fades away." Do this as Denise and Richard go to altar and prepare the salt and honey for consumption!]*

Richard: *[Holds up bowl of salt.]* My body is salt. Taste the breath of death. *[Ring bell.]*

Denise: *[Holds up a stick of honey.]* We have been reborn. Taste the sweetness of life. *[Ring bell.] [Instruct folks on how to come and get salt, then honey. Chant begins again till the four go to get communion after the others.]*

THANKING THE DARKNESS **[Spirit{s}]** 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.

A SPECIAL REQUEST – *[Roz requests a rite of passage. Ring bell.]*

Roz: Elders and tribe mates, I am requesting a future rite of passage into the Mother Goddess stage of my life. I am beginning a journey of mature discernment to help me deal with some issues. Will I have the blessing and help of my chosen Pagan family to guide me in this rite when it is time?

Sandy: *[Sandy, Melissa and Roz join hands. Pause for all to say "Yes!"]* We happily accept your request, Roz, and are proud of your decision to take this step. The Mother

and I have put together a daily practice for you to use in preparing for your rite of passage. And accept this snowflake obsidian to help you ground during your prayer and meditation time.

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.

Spirit: Spirits of Above and Below, Powers of balance, thank you for your gifts of feeling and for blessing our circle. By the God and Goddess, 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!

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* Sources for this ritual include Starhawk and past Yule rituals, inspired by the efforts of your elders and goddess aspects; meditation compiled by Dave.