

Rite of the Summer Solstice and the Skira

Solitary Rite 2008

Brandon in Japan

Historical Note:

It is not known exactly when the Kore, better known as Persephone, was deemed by the Greeks to descend to the underworld. This rite follows Nilsson's suggestion that it was around the Skira, which marked the hot, dry season in Attica when the sun scorched the earth. She would return in autumn at the Eleusinian Mysteries or the Thesmophoria.

NOTE--"we" vs. "I": This is a solitary rite, but the plural "we" is used throughout. This is meant to include all the local land spirits, ancestors, spirit guides, patron deities, and so forth that may also take part in the ritual. It's my feeling that in this sense a solitary is never truly alone.

Altar:

Hallows (Fire, Well, and Tree, or at minimum a Fire)

Optional: white blanket or other white item to represent the Skiron canopy

Two picture frames: one containing an image of Demeter, and the other empty, to represent the absence of The Kore.

Blessing cup

Omen method

Offerings:

Sweet red wine (or other drink) for local spirits, Outdwellers, Earth Mother, Hestia, Hekate, Three Kindreds, Demeter, the Kore, and for the Blessings (Waters of Life)—NOTE: while individualized offerings are most common in ADF, I prefer to give all a share of one drink or food offering, to give the sense of a shared meal; individualized offerings may be substituted as desired

Incense for Hekate

Barley tea, sweetened with pennyroyal mint if possible, for Demeter

Flowers for The Kore

Homeric Hymn to Demeter (to be read aloud from start to where Demeter drinks; in Sargent, lines 1-213)

Mirthful jokes, dances, songs, or other as appropriate (lewd and ribald ones are traditional) for Demeter in honor of how Iambe cheered her up

0. Pre-ritual Preparations: offerings to local spirits

Spirits of this place, thank you once again for allowing me to have my rite here. I give you this offering in gratitude.

(offer wine)

0. Purification: offerings to Outdwellers

Outdwellers, you who may oppose this rite, I give you an offering.

All you who stand against this way,

Take this and make no trouble today.

So may it be.

(offer wine)

1. Initiating the Rite: Opening Prayer

O Spirits, plants and animals, rivers, mountains, ancestors, gods--all beings: this is the rite of the Skira, as in Athenian traditions of ancient times, and as in my tradition here today. At this time of the Summer Solstice, when the sun climbs high and the hot, dry, barren season begins in Attica, we recognize the disappearance of the Kore and the grief of Demeter. Join me in this rite, if you will.

2. Purification (already accomplished in Outdwellers offering)

3. Honoring the Earth Mother

May the first and final honors of all rites

Be always for the Earth.

Offerings be to the Earth Mother,

Hail, Earth Mother. Hail!

(offer wine)

4. Statement of Purpose (already accomplished in Opening Prayer)

5. (Re)Creating the Cosmos (and Two Powers Centering)

Now let us ground and center our Grove.

Roots reaching down

To the waters of Earth below,

Water flowing up

To the Sacred Center.

Branches reaching up

To the fires of Sky above,

Fire flowing down

To the Sacred Center.

May this Grove be well established

In the world beheld in three:

The Land beneath,

The Sky above,

And all around the Sea.

Behold the Sacred Center.

Homeric Hymn to Hestia, lines 1-6 (Sargent trans.):

Hestia, you who of all in the lofty halls

Of immortal gods and of men who walk on the earth

Obtained a home everlasting and highest honor,

Beautiful is your prize, and precious, for without you

No feasts would there be for mortals, where first and last

An offering of honey-sweet wine is poured out to Hestia.

(offer wine to the Fire)

6. Opening the Gate(s)

Now we call out to Hekate, to be our gatekeeper.

O Hekate, Guide,

O Hekate of the Crossroads,

O Hekate, Guide of Demeter in her journey,

We call out to you now

And ask you to join us in this grove,

To be our Gatekeeper.

We give you this incense, recalling the pine torch you held when you guided Demeter in her search.

(offer incense)

O Hekate,

With this offering,

We ask but that you remember us,

For now we need your help.

Be with us in this Grove.

(offer wine)

Now, O Hekate,

Join your might with ours,

In the work of opening the Gates.

O Hekate, Gatekeeper,

Let the Fire be opened as a Gate!

Let the Well be opened as a Gate!

Let the Tree be opened as a Gate!

And as they open,

Let our eyes and ears and hearts

Be opened evermore.

7. Inviting the Three Kindreds

Now let us give honor to the Three Kindreds: the Ancestors, Nature Spirits, and Gods and Goddesses.

Offerings be to the Ancestors.

Hail, Ancestors. Hail!

(offer wine)

Offerings be to the Nature Spirits.

Hail, Nature Spirits. Hail!

(offer wine)

Offerings be to the Gods and Goddesses.

Hail, Gods and Goddesses. Hail!

(offer wine)

O Kindreds gathered here, join me in worship, if you will.

8. Key Offerings

We call out now to the patrons of our rite, the Two Goddesses, the Kore and Demeter.

O Maiden Kore,

O Marriageable maiden Kore,

Slim-ankled Kore,

Fair-haired Kore,

We call out to you now,

Knowing that you cannot be here,

In the way that you were here with your mother.

We give you this offering of wine,

Knowing that you cannot receive it,

But we pour it for you in memorial.

(offer wine)

O Fair-haired Demeter,

O Demeter, Mother of the Kore,

Demeter, grief-stricken,

Demeter, wanderer,

I call out to you now,

And ask you to join us in this Grove.

We ask that you be here in our rite,

That we may be here for you.

We give you this offering of wine,

Knowing that you will refuse it,
As you refused the wine offered to you
By Metaneira as you mourned the loss of your daughter.
We know you refuse this, according to your custom,
But we pour it for you,
That we may fulfill our part in the story.

Now, O Kindreds, let us present to our patrons the Great Sacrifice of the High Holy Day.
To Demeter Mother of the Kore,

We present the Great Sacrifice

Of the High Holy Day:

Barley tea, as you requested from Metaneira on that mournful day.

(offer barley tea)

To the Kore, Fair Maiden,

We present the Great Sacrifice

Of the High Holy Day:

Flowers, as you loved to gather when you were here with your mother.

(offer flowers)

To Demeter and the Kore,

We present the Great Sacrifice

Of the High Holy Day:

A reading of the Homeric Hymn recounting the story of this great loss and grief.

(read Homeric Hymn to Demeter, from the start till the point where Demeter accepts the barley tea; in Sargent, lines 1-213)

And finally,

To Demeter,

We present the Great Sacrifice

Of the High Holy day:

Mirth, to cheer you in your time of sorrow, as Iambe once did.

(dance, tell jokes, sing a silly song, or do something similar, as appropriate--lewd and ribald things are traditional)

9. Prayer of Sacrifice

Now all the sacrifices have been presented. Let us send them forth with one final prayer.

O Demeter and the Kore,

By Land, Sky, and Sea,

By Fire, Well, and Tree,

And by the Kindreds Three,

Accept our sacrifice!

And give us a sign of your acceptance...

10. Omen

(take omen)

11. Calling (asking) for the Blessings

Thanks and praise be to Demeter and the Kore!

Their Blessings are upon us!

O Demeter, as you mourn it is your custom to refuse wine, and take only barley tea.

We console you in your loss, we support you and stand by you in your loss,

Yet we can never fully know your loss.

Therefore, we take the Blessings in the form of wine, according to our custom.

12. Hallowing the Blessings

Let the Blessings come into these Waters, that we may drink them down.

O Demeter and the Kore,

We accept the Blessings you offer.

Give us the Waters of Life!

We accept within us your presence, and your absence.

Give us the Waters of Life!

In gain and loss, presence and absence, grief and sorrow, we stand together!

Give us the Waters of Life!

(drink wine)

13. Affirmation of the Blessings

Hail the Kindreds, strong in me!

Thanks be to the Kindreds Three!

Whether on Land, in Sky, or on Sea,

I'm blessed by their might!

So may it be!

Thanks and praise be to Demeter and the Kore.

14. Workings (if any)

15. Thanking the Beings

Now it is time to draw this rite to a close. Let us give thanks and bid farewell to all gathered here.

First, to the patrons of our rite.

O Demeter, Mother of the Kore,

May you be strong in your time of wandering,

As you search for your beloved daughter.

Thank you for being with us in this rite.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to Demeter.

O Kore, missing Daughter,

May you be strong in this dark time of your journey.

We give you thanks.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to the Kore.

Now let us give thanks and bid farewell to the Three Kindreds.

O Ancestors,

Thank you for being with us in this rite.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to the Ancestors.

O Nature Spirits,

Thank you for being with us in this rite.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to the Nature Spirits.

O Gods and Goddesses,

Thank you for being with us in this rite.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to the Gods and Goddesses.

16. Closing the Gate(s) (and Two Powers Re-centering)

O Hestia, thank you for your presence, for without you

No feasts would there be for mortals, where first and last

An offering of honey-sweet wine is poured out to Hestia.

(offer wine to the Fire)

Now, O Hekate, once more join your might with mine in the work of closing the Gates.

O Hekate, Gatekeeper,

Let the Fire be once again a fire,

Let the Well be once again a well,

Let the Tree be once again a tree,

Let all the Gates be closed,

And as they close,

Let our eyes and ears and hearts

Be opened evermore.

O Hekate, thank you for being with us in this rite.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to Hekate.

Now this rite is almost over, but before it ends let us once more ground and center our Grove, for going out into the world.

Roots reaching down

To the waters of Earth below,

Water flowing up

To the Sacred Center.

Branches reaching up

To the fires of Sky above,

Fire flowing down

To the Sacred Center.

May this Grove go well established

In the world beheld in three:

The Land beneath,

The Sky above,

And all around the Sea.

Go in the peace of the Sacred Center.

17. Thanking the Earth Mother

May the first and final honors of all rites

Be always for the Earth.

Offerings be to the Earth Mother.

Hail, Earth Mother. Hail!

(offer wine)

18. Closing the Rite

The rite is ended, go in peace.

Thanks be to all!

Post-rite: Disposing of flowers and other remaining offerings

O Earth Mother,

One day we shall return to you.

Even so today does this portion of your bounty.

(leave in nature if biodegradable, or dispose appropriately)