

Panthea, Initiations and Festivals of the Goddess **by Olivia Robertson**

1. Alma Mater. The Homing of Children.

Oracle of Alma Mater

Priestess: Ave Alma Mater! We honour you as Mother of us all. Help us to return to our eternal Home, bringing our harvest of good lives. Bless the children you entrust to our care.

Oracle: Every baby is born with a little flame shining over its head. This comes from its spirit body. But as the child grows older, the flame is well-nigh extinguished by the demands of worldly life. But it sometimes happens that the flame does not die down, but rather increases! The child is aureoled with rays of power and beauty. All unknowingly the girl or boy inflicts pain on its elders, by reason of the strange ideas and feelings the rays bring. So in past ages the elders sometimes persecuted such young people and even now they try to extinguish such hurtful Light. This is understandable: for what ruler welcomes his successor?

But there is no need for the worldly-minded to dread occult forces radiated by such children. These elders have enriched humanity with sciences and laws. Under the Patriarch they have ruled the world. What is good in the old laws and behaviour will last.

Nonetheless a new era is dawning swiftly! When a race is faced with self-wrought destruction, inspired mutation can take place. The Gates between the psychic and material spheres are opening! A new humanity is being born. More and more spiritually and psychically gifted children are coming into incarnation. Some are the old ones transformed: others come from the stars. But heed well My warning! A human being without any such occult gifts, but who lives a good life under Patriarchal law, is more pleasing to Deity than a vain and power-drunk "Spiritual Master".

So you need to foster in your children, whatever their gifts, a concern for every being as part of My Cosmic Family. Throughout all spheres, within all galaxies and planets, I am shown forth originally in every creature, every atom. Manifold are My aspects: no creature is to be dreaded nor despised. Respect the unique quality in every God and animal and plant, including your family! Also respect yourself for your own originality which is Divine.

Whenever a new age manifests, I am reborn in all those who know Me. I weep for your sufferings, which yet brings you needful experience. When you are happy, I rejoice. I work through your good deeds. My love is with you always.

On a white-draped altar let there be a figure or picture of the Mother goddess, 2 lighted candles and unlighted candles for children: flowers, burning incense and a bowl of water. Favourite children's fruit drink and biscuits and gifts nearby. Low empty table before altar. 3 Priestesses and 3 Priests, Bard and 2 Temple Maidens are crowned and robed. Hearth fire if possible. 1 Priestess or Mother may enact this rite simply. Music throughout. Debussy, Ravel and Elgar's children's music are suitable. Goddess/God given names may be varied.

1st Priest: Friends, we are assembled before the Holy Altar of Alma Mater, the nourishing Mother Goddess, to welcome a child/children among us. From henceforth our hearth shall be her/his/their home! May the Mother and Father conduct the child/children before us!

Temple Maidens conduct parents and children before altar. If a baby, the Mother holds it throughout.

The Naming

1st Priestess: Glorious is the beautiful Star Goddess, Nuit! At night when children sleep She spreads Her starry body across the dark sky and their parents gaze above and exclaim: "Behold, the Milky Way!" From Her Darkness is born all stars and planets and every creature thereon, furry and scaly, winged and tailed! And She gives birth also to the souls of human children. Harken to the tale of the Woodcutter and his wife.

1st Maiden: There were two woodcutters labouring in a forest. They were very poor, and as they were bewailing their misery this strange thing happened. There fell from heaven a very bright and beautiful star. It slipped down the side of the sky, passing by the other stars in its course, and, as they watched it wondering, it seemed to them to sink behind a clump of willow-trees.

2nd Maiden: "Why! There is a crock of gold for whoever finds it," they cried ... and lo! there was indeed a thing of gold lying on the white snow. It was a cloak of golden tissue, curiously wrought with stars. One of the woodcutters loosened the folds of the cloak that they might divide the pieces of gold ... but there was no gold, nor silver, but only a little child who was asleep.

1st Maiden: One of the woodcutters, who had a good heart took up the child and went to his own house. . . And he came in swiftly, and placed the child in his wife's arms and she kissed it and laid it in a little bed. And the woodcutter said: "It is a Star-Child."

1st Priestess: There is a star within each of us. Let this child/ren be named after Isis and Osiris, the Divine Children of Nuit and her Consort Geb, the Earth God: (*offers incense*) I offer incense to Nuit and Isis.

1st Priest: (*offers incense*) I offer incense to Geb and Osiris.

1st Priestess: (*If child be a girl, to parents*) What name/s have you given your child? (*She holds child's hands*) I name you (.. *Name/s*) Isis! May the grace of Isis be with you, Her namesake.

1st Priest: (*If child be a boy, names the child in the same manner, substituting Osiris.*) May the grace of Osiris be with you, His namesake.

Baptism

Bard: Friends, harken to the vision of a child who saw the Goddess of sea and wells, "I too have my memory of the One who as a child I called Star-Eyes, and whom, later I called "Banmorair-na-mara", the lady of the Sea. I was not more than seven when one day, by a well, near a sea-loch in Argyll, just as I was stooping to drink, my glancing eyes lit on a tall woman standing among a mist of wild hyacinths under three great sycamores. I stood, looking, as a fawn looks, wide-eyed, unafraid. She did not speak, but she smiled, and because of the love and beauty in her eyes I ran to her. She stooped and lifted blueness out of the flowers as one might lift foam out of a pool and I thought she threw it over me. When I was found lying among the hyacinths, dazed, and, as was thought ill, I asked eagerly after the lady in white and with hair "all shiny-gold like buttercups".

2nd Priest: We are reborn through the Water of Life bestowed by the Goddess.

2nd Priestess: (*offers incense*) I offer incense to the Goddess Brigid. She who presideth over the Well of Life at the World's End, and over all wells which bestow vision and healing.

2nd Priest: I offer incense to the God Manannan, whose ocean cloak covers a land of lost temples and cities, which contain treasures of forgotten knowledge.

2nd Priestess: (*holds hands over bowl of water until silvery power is felt and seen*) In the Name of Brigid I bless this water! (*She sprinkles water on head and brow of child/ren with these words:*) In the Name of the Goddess Brigid I baptise you. May you receive true vision and the gift of healing.

2nd Priest: (*blesses child/children, making sign of Aquarius*) In the Name of Manannan I bless you. From past experience may you gain wisdom for the future!

Lighting the Sacred Flame

3rd Priestess: Harken to the story of the Goddess Demeter and her lost daughter Persephone, Goddess of Spring.

Bard: In a brighter world than ours where nothing dies, reigns the good Demeter. She cherishes fields of immortal wheat, and trees laden with flowers and fruit. In flowery glades youths and maidens dance and sing and play. None was more joyful than Persephone; but one day a restlessness came upon her and she sought for adventure. She strayed away on her own and suddenly came upon an alien plant covered with the most extraordinary flowers! Filled with curiosity, she seized the stem and pulled and tugged ... and there came thunders and lightnings .. the roots of the plant forced open a mighty chasm ... and Persephone forthwith fell deep into the underworld!

1st Maiden: Then the chasm closed up again and all that was left was a crack in the ground. So no-one could find Persephone! Her Mother was heartbroken. She visited the Moon Goddess Hecate, but Persephone was not a ghost on the moon! And Demeter searched for her in the sun: but the Sun God Helios assured Her that Her daughter was not a Fire Spirit there. At last Demeter decided to descend into the Underworld which mortals call the earth. Now the unfortunate Persephone had lost her memory! She had turned into a tiny human baby in a dark and smoky city of violence and sorrow. There the people grew old and died with no knowledge of their own immortality, for they were entangled in strange dreams. How could Demeter find her own daughter among so many thousands of babies?

2nd Maiden: She searched and searched from land to land, and from time to time. She visited Ancient Egypt and tried to adopt a little boy to cheer her heart: but his mother, Queen Astarte, angrily drove Her away! At long last she came to a little town in Greece called Eleusis. She disguised Herself as a nurse and was given the task of minding the Queen Metaneira's little boy, Demophoon. Demeter decided to make the boy immortal, as a God! So every night She held him over the hearth fire, so that a magical ray called Ichor might enter his veins. One night, however, the Queen discovered her doing this. She screamed and seized her child crying: "Wretched woman, how dare you hold my infant prince over the flames! Get you hence!"

3rd Priestess: Whereupon Demeter showed herself as a Goddess! She shot up to a great height and towered over the Queen. She shone like the sun, and She spoke these words: "Know that I am the Goddess Demeter! If you had let me, I would have made your son a God! But now he shall be as other mortals." Hereupon the Goddess rose into the sky and returned to heaven in her golden chariot.

3rd Priest: And it came to pass that after much suffering Persephone remembered who she was. "I am the Goddess of Spring", she cried, and ascended to her Mother in heaven. And when his time had come Demophoon too remembered his true nature and followed Her to join the Deities. So may we all know our immortality.

3rd Priestess: (*offers incense*) I offer incense to the Goddess Demeter. Bring us abundance and a rich

harvest of lives well spent!

3rd Priest: (*offers incense*) I offer incense to Zeus, Son of Rhea, Olympian Father. May authority and justice prevail!

3rd Priestess: Friends, let us light the Sacred Flame in token of the inner light within this child. (or children) Earth life changes: the virtues of Love, Beauty and Truth are eternal.

Child lights her/his candle, or parents do so for a baby.

Bounty

1st Priestess: (*holds hands over drink*) In the name of Alma Mater may this drink be blessed in token of the mother's milk.

1st Priest: (*holds hands over food*) In the Name of Alma Mater I bless this food, in token of the labour a father undertakes to feed his children.

The children are given food and drink and they offer it to all. Some is kept for animals and birds.

2nd Priestess: May gifts be offered!

Friends bestow simple gifts on child/ren with words of blessing and goodwill. These are placed by altar.

2nd Priest: Let symbolic tokens be offered, as auguries for the child/ren's future!

Priesthood, Bard and Maidens offer incense, ring, paintbox, building bricks, a bell, herbs and tarot cards on table before altar. Child/ren are placed before table to play with these or choose. From their choice and arrangement of tokens, seers predict future life pattern.

Dream Journey

3rd Priestess: Our dreams bring us memories of the heavens from which we have come.

Soft music.

Bard: "Call not the wanderers home as yet
Though it be late.
Now is their first assailing of
The invisible gate.
Be still through that light knocking. The hour
Is thronged with fate.

To that first tapping at the invisible door
Fate answereth.
What shining image or voice, what sigh
Or honied breath
Comes forth, shall be the ruler of life
Even to death.

Let the young wanderers dream on,
Call them not home.

A door opens, a breath, a voice
From the ancient room
Speaks to them now.
Be it dark or bright,
They knit with their doom.”

1st Priestess: We shut our eyes and imagine ourselves in a beautiful land filled with many coloured trees and flowers ... there is a small stream and birds sing. In the distance are blue hills and white mountains. There is a path for each one of us. Let us imagine ourselves there and journey in silence.* * *

It is now time to return. Let us share our adventures.

Reports, including children’s visions. Coloured rays of help and joy are sent forth to all beings, including animals and plants known to the children.

1st Priest: We give thanks to Nuit and Geb, Isis and Osiris. Brigid and Manannan, Demeter and Zeus. We thank Alma Mater for blessing our Homing of this child/ren. May we go forth with her Divine Blessing.

End of Rite.

SOURCES. “The Star-Child”, from “Fairy Tales”, Oscar Wilde, Bodley Head. “Banmorair-na-mara”, from “The Winged Destiny”, Fiona MacLeod (William Sharp), MacMillan. “Theogony” of Hesiod, Heinemann, Harvard. “Goddesses of Chaldea, Syria, & Egypt”, Lawrence Durdin-Robertson, Cesara.

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