

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

**10. The Eleusinian Mysteries**  
**22nd September - 1st October**

**Oracle of the Kore**

**Priestess:** Holy and most pure Kore, embodiment of Truth and Justice, Compassion and Joy, bring to us Thy gifts of Love and Wisdom.

**Oracle:** Behold, rivers spring from the dark earth and flow into the sea, and the sun draws them into the sky as clouds; from hence they fall as rain and form new streams. In like manner do I manifest, in changing form appearing, but ever the same. Whenever evil predominates over good, I come among you, that free choice may be restored. During the age that is now departing, I taught withdrawal into monastery and nunnery, that the virtues of faith, chastity and humility should prevail with men drunk with violence and cruel tyranny. Enclosed within walls, penitents attempted to submit their obsessive passions to a spiritual goal. When many failed, religious persecution stained the age of faith, and women drew veils about themselves to protect their growing souls. From many men and women there came a spiritual harvest of lovely saints who grew as water-lilies in still lakes.

Now a new era is dawning and the humble must learn to rule, the gentle to defend the weak; women should stand forth and enact the Mother's Will. Lo, I am come! Hear My call. Defend our children, the animals. Protect our woods and waters. This lovely earth was entrusted to the human race to help all its creatures and plants in the evolution of life through its myriad forms. Instead, ignoring the Goddess of Nature, you have become tyrants over Her realm, destroying those you should care for. You are laying waste Her sacred earth. I am Her Daughter. My Mother and I are One. Some of you hear My voice in the silence. Many see My face. From Me you learn ideals that shall come to pass. You learn that you are kin with every being on this planet; for though you prevail with intellect and dexterity, every creature and thing has its individual spirit in the Divine World. And I am Sister to all.

So bring the eternal Sphere of reality into manifestation into this shadow world which reflects it. For alas, the image has become distorted. Unity of Heaven and Earth is attained not through duality, through opposing forces, but through wholeness. The Ideal expresses itself through Nature as we love each and all and honour Truth.

Do not forget happiness and laughter, and even kindly tears! These show forth My Presence. I rejoice with children and young animals and birds. I am with you in music and poetry and the dance. Birdsong is mine and the gentle falling of rain is My transparent veil. Look also above at the stars, for from thence I come in fullness.

*At the gate. Outdoors or within. Mystae in white robes and black cloaks and myrtle wreaths. Prs. Hierophant carries Cista Mystica, a covered basket holding wheat-sheaf. Pr. H. holds pilgrim staff. 2 Priestesses carry jars of wine and fruit-juice and other Mystae bear the Hiera – mint, grapes and barley and wheat cakes. Mystagogus is in yellow and bears caduceus.*

**Pr. H:** Pilgrim Mystae, we are assembled at the Autumnal Equinox to enact the Eleusinian Mysteries. Behold, this place is Eleusis! (*strikes ground twice with staff*) Saisara, the Smiling Goddess, was the ancient

name for the Athenian Eleusis. For thousands of years these sacred Mysteries were believed to encompass the whole Earth, and wherever they were enacted was sacred soil, Eleusis or Elysian where two spheres meet. Let us therefore attune this place with Eleusis of Greece, Crete, Southern Italy and Russia and with the Koreian of Alexandria in Egypt.

**Prs. H:** In all these holy places the Eleusinian Rites of the Two Goddesses, Demeter the Grain Mother and Persephone, the Kore-Virgin were performed in secrecy for nine days of the Autumnal Equinox. Now is the time when the arcanum is revealed for all with true vision and clear mind.

**Pr. H:** Honoured Mystagogus, pray guide us in procession to the Holy Place, the Telesterion.

*Procession. If outside, men hold flaming torches. Music: drums, gong, flutes. Threshold of Telesterion: Woman in mourning robes is seated on stone before cauldron of water or spring. By her are 3 tiers of unlighted candles.*

**Prs. H:** Noble Widow, humbly we come to mourn with you as did the sorrowing Demeter when Her Daughter, Persephone, was carried away by the dark-eyed Lord of the Underworld, the Subterranean Dionysus. May we aid the Mother of All in Her search for Her Child lost in this dark world.

**Woman:** *(anoints every brow saying to each)* Receive true vision that sees even in darkness.

**Pr. H:** Gracious Widow, bestow on us the warmth of love to give us purpose to seek for Lost Souls.

**Woman:** *(gives a taper to light candles, saying to each)* Receive the fire of love that brings to birth the One who is hidden in Darkness.

*Omnes light candles. Procession to Telesterion, an area edged with seven stones, pillars or trees and two before altar. On stone or wood altar is brazier of burning charcoal, a cup of water, with mint and grain in it and two candles. Seated apart in shadow is the Kore, a Priestess with face and body hidden by white veil.*

**Prs. H:** *(sprinkles incense on brazier)* I offer incense to Demeter and to Persephone. I tell of rich-haired Demeter, awe-inspiring Goddess, and of Her Daughter lovely Persephone. Hail, Goddesses! Keep this Eleusis of *(names country)* safe, and govern our Mystery.

**Pr. H:** *(offers incense)* I offer incense to the Subterranean Dionysus. I tell of ivy-crowned Dionysus, Son of Semele, Mother of golden grain. The Goddesses reared Him in the dells of Nysa in the sweet-smelling cave. God of abundant clusters of grape, we hail Thee! Grant that we may come rejoicing to this season of abundant harvest!

**Pr. H:** Let us follow the custom of the Alexandrine Eleusis and present a Divine Drama, that truth may be revealed to the inner soul. May the Mystery of Demeter and Demophoon be shown forth!

*Gong. Music.*

### **Mystery of Demeter and Demophoon**

*Actors: Demeter in widow's weeds. King Celeus and Queen Metaneira in crowns and purple mantles. Demophoon in white tunic. Daughters of Celeus in white with coloured ribbons and garlands. Hermes in yellow holding caduceus. Demeter sits on stone by cauldron of water, "the well."*

**Demeter:** Grief both terrible and savage is in My heart for nowhere, in sun or moon or in this dark world can I find my lost daughter Persephone. I sit weeping by this Maiden's Well at the wayside, shaded by an olive tree.

**Hermes:** The daughters of King Celeus, King of fragrant Eleusis, came to the well to draw water in their pitchers of bronze. They were like Goddesses in the flower of their girlhood: Callidice, Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoe. They knew Demeter not, for the Gods are not easily discerned by mortals.

**Demeter:** Take pity on me, dear children! I am an ancient woman cut off from the gifts of garlanded Aphrodite, like the childless nurses of kings' children or those ancient maidens their housekeepers. Well could I nurse a newborn child, or keep house, or spread my master's bed in a recess of the well-built chamber, or teach the women their work.

**Callidice:** Mother, what the Gods send us we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer; for They are much more powerful than ourselves. We will go to our father's house and tell Queen Metaneira all this matter fully. She has an only child, a son of many prayers and welcome. If thou couldst bring him up, our new Queen would give rich gifts for his rearing!

**Hermes:** The Goddess bowed Her head in assent. And the maidens filled their shining pitchers and went to their father's house and told the Queen. She bade them to fetch the strange woman. And fleetly they gathered up the folds of their lovely garments and darted down the hollow path, and their hair streamed about their shoulders. And they brought Demeter to their house and she walked behind, with her head veiled. And she sat before the fire in silence. And Queen Metaneira gave her a cup of sweet wine but she refused it, accepting only a cup of Kykeon - water with mint and meal.

*Metaneira gives Demeter cup from altar and she drinks.*

**Met:** Hail, Lady! For I think thou art not meanly but nobly born: dignity and grace are conspicuous upon thine eyes as in the eyes of kings who deal justice. Yet we mortals bear perforce what the Gods send us, though we be grieved. Now, since thou hast refuge here, thou shalt have what I can bestow and may nurse my new-born child.

**Demeter:** And to thee also, Queen, all hail, and may the Gods give thee all good! Gladly will I take thy boy to my breast as thou dost bid me, and nurse him. Never I ween shall aught hurt him, for I know a charm stronger than all evil.

**Herm:** So the Goddess took the child Demophoon in Her fragrant bosom with Her divine hands and his mother was glad in her heart. So in Demeter's care Demophoon grew like some immortal being. Now hear this secret not known to the Queen! The boy was not as a baby nourished at the breast, nor as he grew in beauty was he fed with food. Instead rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with Ambrosia which is food of the Gods and enlivened him with Her Holy Breath. And every night She would envelop him in the heart of Promethean Fire on the hearth, so that Ichor, Blood of the Gods, ran through his veins.

*Demeter places her hands upon Demophoon's head and draws them round him in encircling movements as if creating invisible flames.*

**Demeter:** Demophoon, thou art grown beyond thine age through great wonders. Thou art like unto the Gods! But keep silence as to these mysteries which I do not give to the unworthy, but only to those whom I honour.

**Demo:** Lady, I know not whom thou art, but in silence accept from thy hands these good gifts of new life of unspeakable joy. I feel within me the stirrings of immortality!

**Herm:** Demeter would have made Demophoon unaging and deathless, but Queen Metaneira kept watch by night and spied. And when she saw her dear son surrounded by flickering flames of bright-shining fire shed upon him by his nurse, she fell upon him with lamentations and dragged him to her heart.

**Met:** Demophoon my beloved son, the strange woman buries thee deep in magical flames and works grief and bitter sorrow for me. Is this her gratitude? She takes thee from me, my only child.

**Herm:** And the bright Goddess Demeter heard her and was wrath with her. And She straightway banished the divine fire with one wave of Her hand, and Demophoon was left lying upon the hearth as if dead.

**Demeter:** Witless are you mortals and dull! Wretched woman, in thine ignorance thou has wrought folly past healing. For be witness the Oath of the Gods by the Styx, I would have made thy son deathless! But now he can in no wise escape the common lot. Demophoon shall die as do other men. (*Gong, music.*) Lo! I am that Demeter Who is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying Gods and mortal men. But now, in expiation for thy refusal, let the people of Eleusis build Me a great Temple and an altar below it. And I Myself shall teach My rites, that hereafter thee and thy people may reverently perform them, and so win the favour of My heart.

**King Celeus:** Oh wonder! The aged nurse changed Her stature and Her looks before our eyes! She thrust old age away from Her. Beauty spread round about Her and a lovely fragrance wafted about Her. And, greatest miracle, from Her Divine Body a Light shone so brightly that it was seen throughout Eleusis! And all who saw it felt the divine joy Demeter brings, and the blind received their sight.

**Herm:** So ends the ancient tale. But now let a veil be drawn aside and further revelation be vouchsafed.

**Celeus:** So far from my young Queen being struck with awe and terror as I was, rather did she assume a forbidding aspect and faced Demeter severely before her son's body.

**Met:** It was not my will that this son of Athens should so easily attain immortality, through Ambrosia and Ichor drawn from Promethean Fire. Eternal life must be regained not only through divine grace, but through suffering and toil and temptations bravely overcome. So must it be with all men and women of Attica. So was it in the land of Egypt when Thou didst come to me as the Goddess Isis, and claimed my Egyptian son. I, as Queen Astarte refused Thee then, as I do now. As mortal woman suffers through her children and thus learns unselfish love, so must mortal man struggle and endure likewise to find lost divinity within the soul. This is the Fates' decree, until mortality is transformed into everlasting life not by favour but by merit.

**Demeter:** Who dares speak thus to a Goddess?

**Met:** No other than a Goddess. Divine Mother, in Your love for My son, hast thou forgotten thy Daughter, lost these long years, while thou didst rear Demophoon to noble manhood?

**Demeter:** Persephone! Thou art My daughter Persephone! Let the whole world rejoice! But first let Demophoon be brought to new life!

*Demeter takes head of wheat from Cista Mystica on altar and gives it to Demophoon who rises.*

**Demeter:** (*to Demophoon*) A grain of wheat is sown in silence. Your new Name is Aeon.

*Music. Dance of joy by daughters of Celeus. Gong. End of Mystery Play.*

**Pr. H:** Thrice Blessed are they who hear and see these Mysteries and who understand them. The Holy Time has come for which we have sought as pilgrims. (*Omnes lay aside black cloaks*) Let us prepare our hearts for the Epiphany of Persephone. (*all lights save candles are put out*) Know that at the end of an aeon the Panaia, the Widow, retreats bearing with Her the harvest of the old age. She leaves behind the

Daughter, manifesting the New Aeon. Before the Piscean Age the Kore showed Herself secretly to the Mystae of Eleusis in a cave, after the Mystae had bathed in seawater. As the Piscean Age draws to its end, the Kore has manifested to thousands. During the last hundred years She has shown Herself openly in the sky in France, Ireland and recently in Portugal, Spain and Yugoslavia. At On, Holy Place of Isis near Cairo she has been seen physically by thousands, sometimes holding a child and surrounded by doves. She is the Aquarian Virgin of the coming Space Age.

*Gong is struck gently. Music.*

**Pr. H:** Come, Goddess, come, as you came to us at Eleusis of old. In these troubled days show us Thy beautiful compassion and speak with the voice of Truth!

*Prs. H. stands before Kore who is in a trance. She holds up her arms until she feels power flow.*

**Prs. H:** Goddess, behold thy Priestess, Thy Daughter, veiled in earthly form. Mother and Daughter are One! Behold the Kore!

*Silence. Prs. H. holds her hands over Kore until she feels silvery power flow into her. She channels power through Kore's head and draws it through her body until it glows warmly in heart. When she sees light in the Kore she withdraws. Mystae may see with open eyes a swirling like steam round Kore and white light and many colours. Some may see the Goddess's face and form through Kore or above or before her. The sign of the Goddess's presence is "Epopteia", Divine Ecstasy derived from the beatific vision. Union with the Higher Self may be attained. An Oracle may be given.*

*Contemplation. Light is sent forth to the whole earth. Reports of visions and mystical experiences are shared.*

**Pr. H:** We must return to earth. Hearken to the three commandments of Eleusis, given by the Initiate Triptolemus. "Honour your parents. Honour the Deities with fruits. Spare the animals."

**Mystagogus:** Fellow Mystae, we have attained the goal of our pilgrimage. We have shared the Mysterion in accordance with the love in our hearts and truth in our minds. Hearken to this account by the Philosopher Plato in "the Phaedrus" of the Mysterion. "There was beauty to be seen brightly shining, when the blessed choir sang ... the souls beheld the beatific spectacle and vision and were perfected in that Mystery of Mysteries which it is meet to call the most blessed. This did we celebrate in our true and perfect selves .... when as initiates we were allowed to see perfect and simple, serene and happy Spirits. Purer was the Light that shone around us, and pure were we."

**Pr. H:** Let us celebrate the Blessed harvest meal!

*Food and drink are blessed. Meal of cakes, fruit, wine and fruit-juice is shared with joy.*

**Pr. H:** Fellow Mystae, let us give thanks to the Mystic Trinity, Demeter and Persephone and Dionysus.

**End of Rite.**

**SOURCES:** "The Homeric Hymns" trans. Evelyn-White, Heinemann, Harvard. "Eleusis," Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter," C. Kerényi, trans. from the German by Ralph Manheim, Routledge & Kegan Paul. "Juno Covella," Durdin-Robertson, Cesara.

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