

Panthea, Initiations and Festivals of the Goddess
by Olivia Robertson

12. The Tree of Life
Winter Solstice. 21st - 25th December

Oracle of the Goddess Frigga

Priestess: Holy Frigga, Mother Goddess, whose Consort is the God Odin, we invoke Thy Blessing on our poor earth that we may redeem her from all the ills we have inflicted upon her in this cruel iron age.

Oracle: Be of good heart! An Age of Starry Space has dawned, as was foretold by the Seers of old. As you imagine, so it is. When you fear Ragnarok, the general destruction of Gods and men - lo it is there, not for the Deities who live forever, but with your earthly lives. You have as yet no idea of the power of your imaginations! To imagine is to co-create with the Deities. It is through the Divine Imagination that the galaxies were formed in a swirling of light, and the stars sang and the planets turned about them, for this was the imagining of the mighty Star Deities.

It is My Will that My children should create. Artists produce works that show forth the beauty that is inherent in all things, and philosophers through mind make logical systems of thought. Master Builders produce civilizations, and religious teachers give devotees noble religions.

But the greatest of all creations and the most despised, is the Family. Mention the family, and the intelligent, the creative, the spiritual, are bored! They feel the Mother was the restriction which they endured in the womb, from which they were glad to escape into the bright light of incarnation! The Wife suggests the binding responsibilities of home and children that distract the pilgrim on his quest for eternity. Indeed, in the day of the Patriarch it was often the practice of seekers for truth to abandon their homes and go forth into the wilderness, there to seek enlightenment. During the Iron Age the way of the monk and the nun, the scholar and the scientist, was regarded as the highest and best path to Heaven. Heaven was the mind, the spirit, the alienation from both earth and the family.

But now the time has come, when austere studentship has been achieved, for humanity to discover the Divine Family. Each of us has a Divine Family, whether they are My Families, the Aesir and the Vanir, the Family of the Olympian Gods and Goddesses, the Families of Parvati and Lakshmi of India, or your own true peers. Families do not mean separation, for all beings are akin: by venerating your own mother, you honour all mothers: by loving your wives and husbands, you respect all lovers. Care for your own children, and you care for the offspring of every creature throughout the Universe.

Your Spiritual Family will be discovered by you as you tread the Path of the Wise Ones. Drink deep from the Well of Wisdom, but do not ignore the humble, but rather respect the love within them. Therefore, be particularly careful when you do find your Spiritual Family that you give even more love and understanding to your earthly relations and friends! Otherwise you will lose the rainbow bridge with your Spiritual Family, and alienate your earthly friends. The Tree of Life shines through every Being and creature. It shines through Rainbow Bridges of flowing energy, bringing in accord the Almighty Deities and the humblest child and horse and bird and plant. Your pilgrimage will bring you at long last in a spiral from earthly home to Divine Haven. Both are One.

Assembly at the gate. Celebrants including children in many-hued robes and leafy head-garlands, bearing symbolic unwrapped gifts. Priestess in star crown and blue and white robes, holding wand. Priest in gold headdress and red robes, with staff, Maiden and Youth (Lifthrasir and Lif) in white. Priest strikes ground 3 times with staff.

Pr: Fellow Celebrants, at this holy time of the Winter Solstice we are assembled to honour the Tree of Life. When the sun appears lowest in the sky, the stars shine forth in all their glory! The Tree of Life has its roots in the abyss of space and its branches encircle the Universe. Its flowers are the galaxies, and its leaves are all living souls.

Prs: The Tree of Life is reflected about us in the World Tree, named Yggdrasil the Ash by our Norse forebears. Yggdrasil has three roots. One is deep within the earth, encircled by a fiery serpent. The second grows among the four stars of the Southern Cross, in the Realm of Muspell. The third rises from the Himinbiorg, Hill of Heaven, between the three Pole Stars. At the brightest is the Well of Urtha. The Rainbow Bridge Bifrost joins these three roots from the North and South through the centre of the earth. The crown of Yggdrasil reaches the stars of Aquila, the eagle, Galactic Centre.

Pr: Bifrost also connects the mighty branches of the Tree as it ascends through the Seven Heavens. Souls journey over the Rainbow Bridge higher and higher from Valhalla, home of the valiant Alfheim, wherein dwell the White Elves, Bredablik the beautiful to Glitnir, glorious with gold and silver.

Prs: And at the Crown of the Tree are three Heavens shining with eternal Light, and these never pass away nor is the Rainbow Bridge to these ever broken. These are Gimlae, Andlang and Vilblain. The Tree is also within ourselves, for our spine is the trunk and our radiant psychic centres are the fruits.

Pr: Let us make procession to the Tree that has grown so wonderfully from a small seed shed by the Mother Goddess.

Procession to High Altar which is draped with red and gold. On it is burning incense and 7 lighted candles. Before it, left, is small tree in tub of earth to be replanted with honour in 12 days; centre, a cauldron of water and cup and right, a large unlighted candle entwined with mistletoe. There are unlighted candles in circle round Temple. Food and drink are ready.

Celebrants: *(place gifts in and around tree with these words)* I offer this gift to Frigga and Odin, the Givers of gifts.

Prs: *(makes loop in air with wand)* I invoke the Goddess Frigga!

“Frigga, Frigga, Frigga, Earth Mother,
Blessed be the fruits of Thy womb,
Blessed be the paps of the Cow Goddess Audhumla
That nourish all creatures.
Make our fields to increase and flourish.
The earth fruitful and healthy.
With shining harvest of shafts of millet,
Broad harvests of barley and all grains.
Hail to thee, Frigga, Mother of us all!
From the dark winter bring forth abundance
And bless us with noble progeny.”

Pr: *(lifts staff aloft and makes lightning flash sign)* I invoke the God Odin.

“We call upon the Mighty Father,
Husband of Frigga, strong to protect.

Father of the Aesir and the Vanir,
Powerful and glorious Deities,
Odin, carry us over the Rainbow Bridge Bifrost
To the beautiful Heavens.
We sing praise of Odin the wise one."

Prs: Know that Lifthrasir and Lif are the Maiden and Youth who sheltered within the branches of Yggdrasil when the bright planet Asgard fell. They come forth renewed at the birth of the New Age. (*anoints Maiden and Youth's brows with water saying:*) May you receive the Water of Life.

All brows are thus anointed.

Pr: Fellow Celebrants, let the Divine Mystery of the Tree and the Well be presented. (*strikes ground twice with staff*)

Mystery of the Tree and The Well

Actors. The Wanderer is in black cloak with wide-brimmed black hat concealing face. He holds pilgrim's staff. 3 Women in black cloaks and hooded faces with bare feet crouch in circle round cauldron. 7 Star Maidens in star crowns and white robes.

Wanderer: Weary and heart-sick am I, travelling through mountain torrents, cruel rocks and ice-fields. I have abandoned my loving wife and children for this arduous pilgrimage, seeking for wisdom to cure the ills of mankind! I despair at human folly. Children alone are joyful. But when they reach maturity they are taught of past injustice and, burning with hateful violence, join the bitter warfare of their tribes! The beautiful earth is ravaged through man's greed and envy. Clearly I foresee that such evil seeds can only produce catastrophe. Doom is upon the earth and all its creatures. Why, even this tree before me looks sickly and twisted with pollution! And these three wretched women crouching on the bare earth, meanly clad, feet bare, what refreshment can they draw from this contaminated well!

1st Woman: The joy of the morning to you, good Lord! Would you spare a coin for a poor old woman?

Wan: Greetings to you, Reverend Mother. Alas, I have no coins for you. Bad it is for you in your old age to be reduced to begging in the cold winter.

2nd Woman: A happy marriage for you, fine stranger! Shall I sing you a ballad of lovers who part and meet again?

Wan: Wrong it is to see a fine woman like yourself reduced to singing love ballads by the dusty wayside! You should be in your own home with a good husband and children.

3rd Woman: Greeting to you, melancholy Wanderer! Would you have good fortune? Shall I read your palm?

Wan: Sad indeed am I to see a young girl telling fortunes to travellers at the side of the road! You should be with your father and mother, safe, at home.

1st W: We three are Spaewives who greet strangers at the crossroads. We have some little skill in divination. From the roots of the past come the present. Answer me this, you with all your book learning! What would you give to save the wide earth from destruction?

Wan: This is easily answered! I would give all I have!

1st W: You need only give your memory.

Wan: My memory! It is a rich store. I remember my wife and children who for so long have awaited my return. Yet my own thoughts give me the lie. It is bitter memory of past injuries that cause cruel wars. Take mine if you can!

1st W: Drink this water. (*gives Wan. water to drink. He does so.*)

Wan: Most strange and wonderful! I am happy for the first time for long years! I feel as I did as a child when I first saw a horse grazing in a glade, its coat dappled by sun through leafy trees.

2nd W: The task is not completed. You are joyful. Others remain unhappy. To transform the world you must give up all your power and influence!

Wan: But it was my intention to return to my fellows filled with the wisdom to govern well and to teach the truth! Yet, when so many have tried to change the world through will and intellect and have failed, how may I succeed? I am willing to give up my power, if you can take it.

2nd W. dips Wanderer's fingertips in water.

Wan: What is this strength that imbues my limbs and fills my being with glory? Vain are the deliberations and the edicts of rulers and teachers! I shine like the sun and so may awaken the sun in all - so may the people govern and teach themselves!

3rd W: The task is not yet complete. Your clear mind foresees a terrible doom to fall upon the earth, as a necessary consequence of foolish and evil deeds. Will you surrender your farsighted vision and all faculties of your mind?

Wan: This would be my death, for I dwell in my mind: it is my heaven. Yet as foresight only shows me inevitable catastrophe, I must surrender that which I value most. Take my mind, if you can!

3rd W. anoints Wanderer's head and brow with water.

Music. Wagner's Valhalla music is suitable.

Wan: Oh wonder! I stand upon the Hill of Himmelbiorg at the Pole Star! Below me is the Spring of Urtha, and above me spread the radiant branches of Yggdrasil! Bright are the fruits of Immortality, the golden apples of Iduna. Now I feel the Tree within my being. Its fire rises within my spine and the branches spread throughout my body. The fruits thereof glow within me and rays of love spread from my heart. With starlight on my brow I can truly see into the minds of all creatures, and a crown of stars about my head endows me with the wisdom of the Gods.

1st W: Look within the Well and see yourself.

Wan: (*looks in cauldron*) I remember myself. I am the God Odin!

1st W: You speak the truth. You are Odin the Wanderer Who after the destruction of the ill-fated planet Asgard roamed the stars seeking wisdom.

2nd W: You are Odin of The Rainbow Bridge. You bear souls to the seven Heavens on your magical horse Sleipnir, and endow them with ecstasy through beautiful visions!

3rd W: You are Odin the Master Builder of the Halls of the Heavens. For what is divinely imagined must be embodied through all spheres. Those who work with you help to bring heaven upon earth, for what is beautifully pictured must of necessity be manifested. This is the Will of the Mothers, who wish their children to create noble new worlds throughout the Universe.

3 Women rise and throw back hoods.

Wan: Who are You that tower among the stars, the Well of Truth at your feet?

1st W: We are the Norns who determine the destiny of all creatures. My Name is Urtha, which is Fate.

2nd W: We are the Norns who bring progeny to every creature, in ever-renewing life. My Name is Verthandi, which is Being.

3rd W: We are the Norns who nourish the Tree of Life with the Waters of Inspiration. My Name is Skulda, which is Necessity. Odin, return to Frigga and your children, the Aesir and the Vanir, bright Deities, and bring with you the gifts of wisdom, ecstasy and inspiration to human-kind, that evil be transformed into good, hatred into love, and fear to hope!

Wan: May the Divine Will be done! Let the Seven Maidens of the Great Bear weave star-rays of harmony, shedding these gifts on earth!

Dance of Star Maidens. Music by Sibelius is suitable.

End of Mystery.

Pr: *(strikes the ground once with staff)* Fellow Celebrants, let us meditate upon the Mystery of the Tree and the Well.

Prs: Let us sit in tranquillity and with eyes shut travel by the Rainbow Bridge to the Fifth Heaven. . . the Heaven Gimlae shall stand when both the lower Heavens and earth shall pass away, and the good and righteous shall inhabit it for all times. Thus spake the Prophetess Volva: "I know where stands a Hall brighter than sunlight, better than gold, in Lee-of-Flame, Gimlae: hosts of the righteous shall it inherit, and live in delight everlastingly." ***

Meditation. Rays of understanding, joy and hope are sent forth. Oracle may be given. Reports.

Pr: At the Winter Solstice life is renewed as the sun strengthens on its course. Let Lifthrasir and Lif light the Solar Flame!

Strikes ground 3 times. Lif gives Lifthrasir lighted taper and he holds central candle while she lights it. They join finger-tips over flame and kiss. Omnes light candles from central flame.

Prs: Let us rejoice! A New Age is born!

Omnes hold hands in circle, and move 3 times round path of the sun.

Prs: Let the children present the Dance of the Elves, faeries, dwarfs and trolls!

Children's dance. Pier Gynt, Grieg, is relevant. General dance and song. Gifts are presented. Mulled wine and fruit-juice and seasonal fare are enjoyed. Prs. and Pr. give thanks to Frigga and Odin and send forth Omnes with blessing.

End of Rite.

SOURCES: "The Prose Edda," Snorri Sturluson, trans. Jean I. Young, University of California Press. "Gods & Myths of Northern Europe," H.R. Davidson, Penguin. "The Libretto of the Ring Cycle," Wagner. "Star Names," Hinckley Allen, Dover.

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