

Liturgy1

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Question 1: Describe the purpose and function of ritual. (minimum 300 words)

Ritual is a set of symbolic behaviors that are enacted in specific ways for a specific purpose. Ritual has been a major part of human culture for thousands of years and over the years has continued to serve the same basic functions, primarily that of strengthening the beliefs and cohesion of the community.

The primary function of ritual seems to be to strengthen the spiritual beliefs of those who participate in it. It provides a common purpose and reinforces the shared values of a culture. It also helps participants to change the level of consciousness, raise awareness and connect to the higher self.

The purpose of ritual, however, is harder to describe. It largely depends on what the occasion is that is being celebrated. High Days are not the only rituals performed in ADF. Rites of passage like marriages, deaths, births, and puberty rites could have very specific traditions and these rites will have specific language and actions associated with them. Rituals can also be conducted for other specific purposes like healings, consecrations, protection of the folk or the land,¹ to offer our service to the kindred,² and purification. Even daily routines can be a form of ritual.

For many, public rituals are the only rites they participate in during the year. For these people, rituals can serve the purpose of reconnecting them to the roots of their belief and renewing their spiritual center. By providing an outlet for healing, it can also serve as a valuable social support network for people who are in crisis. Additionally, it provides a forum for direct communication with the Kindred and for the making of oaths in the presence of witnesses that could assist you with upholding the pledges you've made.

Basically, the purpose and function of ritual is to connect us to what we believe to be "the divine." They also create and strengthen social bonds and nourish the interpersonal relationships of the people who participate in them.

Question 2: Describe some of the roles individuals might take on within the context of ritual. (minimum 100 words)

While I cannot speak of what other Groves may do, I can discuss how the roles in ritual are divided in Feather River Protogrove. The *Primary celebrant* is the person leading the ritual they make sure that each section of the ritual order is done in order and effectively performed. The *Sacrificer* is responsible for making the appropriate sacrifices at the correct time. The *Seer* leads the meditations and helps the members get into a spiritual mindset he also reads the omens. He may also take the role of *Bard* if there are not enough people to conduct ritual. The *Bard* is responsible for leading the group in songs, telling tales and prompting celebrants that may have forgotten lines. The *Warrior* is responsible for making offerings to the outdwellers and the

¹ Ian Corrigan. The Intentions of Druidic Ritual. 2008 Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/intentions.html>>.

² Ibid.

guardian of the rite. He is also responsible for tending the fire and removing disruptive influences from ritual and for talking to people who might disrupt the ritual (firemen, hikers, neighbors, police, etc.). He may also take the role of *Sacrificer* if there are not enough people to perform ritual.

Question 3: Describe the concepts of the Center and the Gates in ADF's Standard Liturgical Outline. (minimum 300 words)

In ADF we recreate the cosmos and establish a sacred center whenever we do a High Day rite. The vertical axis of the cosmos consists of the Three Worlds; the Heavens, the Midworld, and the Underworld. The horizontal axis (the Midworld) consists of the Three Realms; the land, the sea, and the sky. Where these two axes meet is the Sacred Center, a liminal place where the most powerful magic can happen.

Once we have established the Three Worlds and the Three Realms we must then open the gates to the other worlds. In ADF rituals the well operates as a gate to the Underworld; it connects us to the powers of chaos and potential. Through the well offerings can be made to the ancestors or chthonic deities.³ Additionally, the fire functions as a gate to the Heavens; it connects us to the powers of order and it represents the power of thought and inspiration.⁴ Through the fire, offerings are made to the deities and they are carried to the Heavens. Finally, The tree (with its roots below, its branches on high and its trunk here in the Midworld) operates as a bridge between the heavens and the underworld and spans the Midworld as well.⁵ The tree is where the Sacred Center is formed and offerings to the spirits of nature and the Sidhe are often made there.

While many Indo-European hearth cultures do not specifically have a gate in the same sense that we see it in ADF, they certainly have stories of heroes that traveled to the underworld or to the Heavens. In most IE cultures there is one being, called a *psychopomp*, who is charged with the duty of mediating travel between the worlds, he may be a messenger to the gods or a conductor of the dead. We make offerings to one of these beings in ritual to ask his aide in opening the gates to the Otherworlds so that we might more easily communicate with the Kindred.⁶

Through recreating the cosmos and making offerings to the Gatekeeper we are able to open the gates to the other worlds this is done in a variety of ways. Some individuals ask the participants to envision the gates opening then declare that the gates are open, some use hand gestures, others spin around in circles, while others waive wands or staves above their heads. Whichever method is used when the gates have been opened, the participants stand on sacred ground which exists outside of normal time and space. It is believed that when you stand near the Sacred Center the Kindred can know your hearts and minds.

³ Brooks, Arnold. *A Druidic Ritual Primer*. Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. 2008. Retrieved 29 July 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/ritual-primer.html>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ian Corrigan. *The ADF Outline of Worship: A Briefing for Newcomers*. Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. 2008. Retrieved 29 July 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/prerite-briefing.html>>.

Question 4: Discuss why ADF rituals need not have a defined outer boundary, or "circle" and the sacralization of space in ritual. (minimum 100 words)

Circles, like those used by Wiccans, are basically meant as protection from unwanted powers. This is usually done because a great deal of the ritual is performed with the purpose of working magic.

In ADF rituals our primary focus is not magic working, though this may be done at times, but creating a **ghosti* relationship with the Kindred through prayer and sacrifice. However, we do recognize that negative influences may affect our rites and we make offerings to the Outdwellers, those beings not aligned with our work. When we make offerings to these beings we ask that they leave us, and our rite, alone in return for the gifts we have offered them.⁷

Question 5: Discuss the Earth Mother and her significance in ADF liturgy. (minimum 100 words)

Reverence for the Earth Mother in ADF ritual is a remnant from the days of the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA). In ADF we honor her because she is the source of life from which everything comes and everything must return. Many Indo-European hearth cultures do not have a figure that could be identified specifically as an "Earth Mother," though the ancient Persians (Avestans) did, but she is a popular concept in Neopaganism and was an important element in the RDNA, so she remains.

It is true that many indo-Europeans had goddesses that represented fertility and it is also true that they sometimes had goddesses of the land that were responsible for bestowing sovereignty. These were often regional and these were not the same as the modern interpretation of the all-encompassing "Earth Mother" or "Gaia" that seems popular in Neopaganism and ADF today.

In ADF rites the Earth Mother is called upon to witness our words and actions in ritual and is ritually thanked for upholding the world and sustaining us through her bounty. She is viewed as the mother of us all and so revered for her place as the grand matriarch.

Question 6: Discuss the ritual significance of Fire and Water in ADF liturgy. (minimum 100 words)

In Vedic and Iranian cultures fire is the means to transport sacrifice to the heavens. Some might even say that for the Vedics the fire is the axis mundi, though I do not necessarily agree. *Ár nDraíocht Féin* also uses fire as a means to transport sacrifice to the kindred, more often to the gods than to the ancestors or the nature spirits but sometimes offerings to these kindred are also made at the fire. It represents the power of the heavens, the powers of order.

Water is the means for transporting sacrifice to the underworld. Generally, this is the appropriate place to offer to the ancestors and Chthonic deities. It represents the unformed powers of potential, what we call chaos.

Question 7: Discuss the origins of the Fire, Well and Tree, and the significance of each in ADF liturgy. (minimum 100 words for each of the Fire, Well and Tree)

⁷ Thompson, Anthony R. ADF Ritual Frequently Asked Questions. *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc.* 2008. Retrieved 28 August 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/ritual-faq.html>>.

We are aware that the fire, well, and tree (or other axis mundi) were all important to most Indo-European cultures but it is interesting to note that the only Indo-European culture that we have evidence of all three in one ritual is the Indo-Iranian culture. The Haoma ritual uses a pomegranate tree, a spring and a fire in the ceremony and it is one of the oldest rituals outlined in the Gathas.

In “A Druidic Ritual Primer” Arnold Brooks says “fire symbolizes the power of thought.”⁸ Fire represents the order of the cosmos. It also represents the intellect. The heavens are constant and unchanging and since fire comes from the heavens, at least in its earliest form, lightning, fire represents order in the cosmos. It also brings order to culture by providing warmth, cooking our food, and driving off predators. In some cultures fire became so important that the tree and well seem to not even play a part. In others it is the primary mode of converting material goods to spiritual gifts for the gods, while the tree and well play minor or symbolic roles.

Arnold Brooks goes on to say that water is “the symbol of our emotions.”⁹ It represents the powers of chaos and potential. Things that were under the earth were unknown and therefore mysterious and terrifying. Waters also sprang from the earth and, during flood periods, the waters would overflow the banks and rage wildly. In a time when swimming was probably not learned by every young person, the water could also be deadly. This is one of the reasons why the well represents chaos. From the archaeological record we know that votive offerings were made to wells, springs, rivers, and other bodies of water by many of the Indo-European cultures. Offerings in ADF are made to the well for the ancestors and to the Chthonic gods as well.

The tree is the most often used axis mundi in *Ár nDraíocht Féin*. It seems, however, that many of the southern cultures, such as the Iberians, Greeks, Romans, Iranians, and Vedics, may have used a mountain or a pillar on a mountain, instead. The tree is the world axis that connects the Underworld, the Midworld, and the Heavens. With its roots below in the earth, its trunk here in the Midworld, and its branches in the Heavens, it is easy to see how the tree could be seen as a liminal, and therefore, magical object. The mountain or pillar also does this and, in some cases, a stone that represented the navel of the world (omphalus) was also revered as an axis mundi.

Question 8: Discuss the Outdwellers and their significance in ritual (or not, as the case may be). (minimum 100 words)

Outdwellers, or Outsiders, are those spirits or beings that are not aligned with our ways and may interfere with the ritual. In some Groves the Outdwellers are given an offerings to prevent them from troubling the rite. Other Groves may choose not to acknowledge the Outdwellers.

There are many different points of view on the Outdwellers in *Ár nDraíocht Féin*. Some members believe that they represent beings of Chaos and disorder or are unknown beings with whom we’ve not formed a **ghosti* relationship. Other members believe that they represent powers that are destructive or counterproductive to the rite. These may be beings like the Titans (Hellenic) or the giants (Norse) or even deities that don’t approve of the purpose of our rite. Finally, there are those who see the Outdwellers as hostile forces from within us. These may include feelings of distrustfulness, doubt, pettiness, jealousy, or ill will toward someone.

⁸ Brooks, Arnold. *A Druidic Ritual Primer*. *Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc.* 2008. Retrieved 29 July 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/ritual-primer.html>>.

⁹ Ibid.

Symbolically leaving these things at a specific location before entering sacred space may help you focus on the work at hand.¹⁰

Question 9: Describe the intention and function of the Three Kindreds invocations, and give a short description of each of the Kindreds. (minimum 100 words for each of the Three Kindreds)

The gods are the deities of the indo-Europeans. Some of these may have originally been the ancestors or heroes of a given culture that over time were venerated and eventually elevated to the status of godhood. Others may be personifications of nature; deities of rivers, mountains, winds, rain, lightening or the moon might be in this category. Invocations to them are somewhat like sending them a message to tell them that we are doing something that might interest them. Some people see it as an invitation but it is often not that specific, perhaps it is more like an announcement over a PA system.

The Nature Spirits are beings of the Midworld. They may be elements (fire, water, air, and earth), actual animals and plants, spirits of animals and plants that remain, or spirits and beings of locality. Some people in ADF also equate the Sidhe with these beings, I do not. I see the Sidhe as beings that transcend the classes of Kindred; I even sometimes see them as Outdwellers. Invocations to the spirits of nature should be handled cautiously. Some elements of nature are not welcome in our rites (bears and mountain lions come to mind). Basically the invocation is also, like the one made to the gods, meant to attract the nature spirits so that they might witness the sacrifices we make to them.

The Ancestors may be the kindred of our blood, our literal ancestors, or kin of heart, which may be a hearth culture that we connect to even with no ancestral ties. We revere the ancestors in Ár nDraíocht Féin. Some might even say we worship them. It is certainly likely that our gods may actually be deified ancestors or heroes. When we do an invocation to the ancestors we are calling upon them to witness the sacrifices we offer and to witness our words and actions. Often they are called upon to witness our oaths. This makes sense because, in ancestral times, if a person broke an oath he shamed his entire family; this certainly would have included his ancestors.

Question 10: Describe other possible models for the "Filling Out the Cosmic Picture" sections. (minimum 100 words)

Some Groves or individuals use songs to fill out the cosmic picture. Others may use chants. In either case the three worlds and three realms must be acknowledged in Ár nDraíocht Féin High Day rites.

In our Protogrove we are collecting images that represent each of the three realms, an eagle for the sky, a salmon for the sea, and a stag, deer, or elk to represent the Midworld. Each of these would be installed at the respective hallow after being paraded around the nemeton with lots of song and ceremony. We've also plans to eventually carry in images or symbols that represent the deities of the occasion and our patrons, Taranus/Tishtrya/Thor at each rite.

¹⁰ Ancient Symbols, Modern Rites: A Core Order of Ritual Tutorial for Ár nDraíocht Féin. Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. 2008. Retrieved 28 August 2008.
<<http://www.adf.org/cgi-bin/adf/wiki/view/Main/TheOutsiders>>.

Question 11: Discuss how one would choose the focus (or foci) for the Key Offerings.
(minimum 100 words)

The Key offerings are made to the Kindred of the Occasion. The selection of the focus for the Key Offering would probably depend on the type of rite being performed, the hearth culture of the rite, the Kindred being honored, and possibly also the time of the year it is being performed.

As far as what type of offering should be made, it largely depends on what the Kindred being honored would probably like. This information can be gleaned from stories about the being that will be honored. The standard offerings of whisky for most gods and silver to the well for Chthonic deities would usually be appropriate. Offerings of ale or mead to the ancestors and herbs, ghee, or bone meal to the nature spirits are also appropriate. Other considerations might include various grains, vegetables and fruits, honey, and milk or cream. I've seen offerings of Salmon made to some nature spirits and offerings of honey with cream for others.

Question 12: Discuss your understanding of Sacrifice, and its place in ADF liturgy.
(minimum 100 words)

The word *sacrifice* means to “to make something set apart from ordinary reality.”¹¹ So, when we make sacrifice of an item to the Kindred we are taking that item out of human use and making it holy.

According to Kirk Thomas, there are five main reasons for performing sacrifice; maintaining the Cosmic Order, delivering services through gifts, providing protection, commensality, and mitigating Order with Chaos. In all of these types of sacrifice, gifts are given to the Kindred, either in thanksgiving for a specific act already performed by them or with the expectation that a specific act will be performed. This reciprocal relationship is often referred to as a **ghosti-* relationship. The hypothetical Proto-Indo-European word **ghosti-* means essentially, a person with whom you have a reciprocal obligation of hospitality.

Question 13: Discuss your understanding of the Omen. (minimum 100 words)

Since the purpose of most ADF rites is to make offerings to the Kindred that we might form reciprocal relationships with them, it is important that we know whether these gifts were received and if so, what gifts are being offered in return. This is done by taking an omen during the rite.

Many members of ADF believe that the future event is itself the gift; I believe that the knowledge of the future event is the actual gift. The difference is subtle but important. If a bad omen is received many members of ADF will make additional offerings to, hopefully, change the omen. I believe that the omen is simply the Kindred's way of telling us what is coming, not that they themselves are those responsible for what is coming. The foretelling of a possible future event is therefore the gift and the future event itself is not an act of the Kindred.

So if the seer were to pull Hagalaz in ritual I would not see this as a bad omen that we were about to experience destructive forces in our lives but as a good omen that the Kindred chose to tell us about it so that it might be averted. I would then thank them for the omen and ask for their help in averting the disaster, offering them additional sacrifices as well. Many other members of ADF would take this rune as meaning the Kindred were displeased and offer them

¹¹ Thomas, Kirk. The Nature of Sacrifice. Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. 2008. Retrieved 28 August 2008. <<http://www.adf.org/articles/cosmology/nature-of-sacrifice.html>>.

more sacrifices, asking the Kindred to look more favorably upon them. The outcome may be the same, with the Kindred assuming that the supplicant would like help averting the disaster or the Kindred may simply offer additional gifts, telling them additional things that may come to pass (not necessarily negating the previous omens).

Question 14: Discuss your understanding of the Blessing Cup, or "Return Flow". (minimum 100 words)

The Return Flow is the time during ADF rites when the blessings and gifts of the Kindred descend into the waters and the congregation drinks the essence of these gifts. The Return Flow really serves two purposes in ADF. One is of a magico-religious nature the other is of a social (possibly also magico-religious) nature.

Essentially, when we imbibe the Waters of Life we are drinking in the gifts of the Kindred and making them part of ourselves. This is the magico-religious side of the Return Flow.

The sharing of the Waters of Life also serves the purpose of uniting the people in a type of "fictive kinship."¹² Michael J. Enright proposes in "Lady With a Mead Cup" that communal drinking rituals were a way to form bonds and that the alcohol provides a substitute for blood kinship.¹³ Whether this was viewed by our ancestors as a type of **ghosti* relationship, a literal transfiguration of the blood, or merely a way to form bonds of brotherhood (much the way modern college fraternities do) is unclear but what is evident is that the intent was to create stronger bonds among those who participated.

Question 15: Describe possible cultural variances for elements discussed in questions 3 through 14 above. (minimum 100 words)

#6 & 7

The Fire is used in every ADF rite, however, some hearth cultures made little or no use of the well, particularly the Vedic culture. For people who practice this hearth the well may be acknowledged in ADF rites but not be focused on as much as the fire is. The Roman culture also does not make use of a well but uses an offering shaft instead. Likewise the tree is also not central to all Indo-European cultures, a mountain, or in the case of the Iberians a stele of stacked stones, might be used instead to represent the axis mundi.

#8

Some Groves or individuals deal with the Outdwellers, while others post a guardian; a few do both. Additionally, the way some people or Groves deal with the Outdwellers seems almost belligerent, defiant, or downright rude to those who do not treat with them in that way. To those people who choose to treat with them in this manner though it may seem that they are simply being firm handed with them.

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Some Groves or individuals might be more prone to the use of mead, whisky, wine, other spirits, or even juice in the waters of life, depending on local custom and personal preference.

¹² Enright, Michael J. Lady with a Mead Cup. Dublin: Four Courts Press.1995. 16-17.

¹³ Ibid.

Question 16: Describe how ADF liturgy corresponds with your personal or group practice.
(minimum 100 words)

My Protogrove is an Ár nDraíocht Féin congregation; so, naturally, it follows ADF liturgy in all of its public rites. So far we've had only two private rites which both involved the birth and saining of a child. Both of these had elements of ADF cosmology and liturgy but did not follow the core order strictly.

My personal practice is also Ár nDraíocht Féin. At one time I was Wiccan and I struggled for several years to maintain both my Wiccan and ADF traditions. After a very powerful personal spiritual experience at Wellspring in 2005 I began to devote myself to an entirely ADF path. I have a meditation space in my home equipped with shrines and altars where I and my family members can pray, meditate, or do daily devotionals. My devotionals are not always in the Core Order of Ritual. However, I do make offerings to the Outdwellers, recognize the three worlds and three realms, and make offerings to each of the Kindred. Lately I have become intrigued with the use of mudras or hand gestures in ritual and have begun to devise a type of ritualized dance that could be used each morning instead. Figuring out how to recognize each of the three realms might be interesting but I think I will work it out.