**Order of Paladins**

**The Armoring**:

The first degree initiation of the Order of Paladins, turning a novice into a squire, is The Armoring. The Order of Paladins has also offered this initiation on occasion to the public so that people who wish to dedicate themselves to the warrior path without becoming members of the Order may do so.

Commandery: Grand Master, Seneschal, Marshall, Under Marshall, Standard Bearer, Quartermaster, Constable, and two Sergeants at Arms.

Things Needed:

Altar table with God statues.

Each of the participants involved can carry whatever Magickal Weapon suits them, which the exception of the four warriors representing the cardinal directions, who will be equipped as follows:

• Marshall: sword

• Standard Bearer: staff or spear

• Quartermaster: chalice

• Under Marshall: shield

The other exception to this rule about Magickal Weapons is the Constable, who must not wear an edged weapon (dagger/athame or sword) for this ritual: Normally the Constable will carry a staff or wand(s) instead.

Order of Paladins knights, masters, and paladins display their vexillum or banners around the periphery of the ritual area.

Participants who are not members of the Order can dress in warrior gear if they wish. Order of Paladins members will wear their black gis and will typically paint their faces with personal warrior designs.

**Processional:**

Participants form up in an area outside of the ritual area, carrying their Magical Weapons to be charged in the ritual. The Constable and Sergeants at Arms will go to the assembly area and the Sergeants at Arms will direct each person to take a paper square from the bowl provided and keep it for use in the ritual later. The Constable will then lead the participants in a procession to the ritual area and form them up in a semi circle facing the Commandery members, who are arrayed facing the crowd in an arrow-head formation, with the Commandery members in front and the other Order of Paladins members in line behind the Commandery:

**Challenge**:

The Constable then addresses the participants:

*“I can see in some of your eyes that haunted look that tells me that you’ve been victims. You’ve been set upon, bruised, harassed, suffered setbacks. That’s a terrible thing. But if you came to this place to claim the title ‘victim’ and expect to have us feel sorry for you, then you’ve come to the wrong place. You may as well turn around and leave. Yet if you came here to empower yourself, to take charge of your life, to say ‘Never Again!’, then you are very welcome. We warriors are here to show you how.*

*“And some of you have that inward look which tells me that you don’t like what you see when you look in the mirror. You consider yourself weak or flawed or insignificant. That’s a difficult thing to deal with, to be sure. But if you came here to rub shoulders with us warriors, hoping that you’d gain some respect or honor by association only, then I suggest you get lost. We’ve no time for that. But if you’ve come here to reinvent yourself, to rise from your own ashes like the Phoenix, to be glorious, then you are very welcome indeed. We are here to witness your triumphs and cheer you on.*

*“And some of you have fear in your eyes. You’ve found the world to be a chaotic and dangerous place. But if you came here hoping that we warriors will stand between you and that scary world, then think again. Yet if you came here to stand shoulder to shoulder with us, face your fears and not back down, then you’ll find yourself amongst friends. We warriors are here to stand with you and watch your back.*

*“At this point in many rituals the priestess or priest pokes you in the chest with an edged weapon and says things about it being ‘better to rush upon this’ than enter with fear and demand secret passwords. I’m not wearing an edged weapon today. There are no passwords that will get you through life. What you need to enter here is not a secret. To enter this Circle you need to bring seven things: Loyalty, Justice, Sincerity, Courtesy, Compassion, Courage and Honor. If you have these, then enter and take your places around the Circle.”*

The two Sergeants at Arms smudge and asperge the participants as they enter the ritual area. One Sergeant is normally stationed on one side of the line with a bowl of water: She sprinkles the participants as they pass by dipping her fingers in the bowl and shaking her fingers at them. The other Sergeant is on the other side with a sage smudge stick. The Constable directs the participants as they enter to place their weapons or other items to be charged on or around the altar, then take their places around the perimeter of the Circle. Then the Constable and the Sergeants at Arms will then take up stations around the altar to guard the weapons left by the participants. Once everyone is in position, the Commandery members take up their positions. The Constable and the Sergeants at Arms are positioned in the middle of the ritual area around the Altar as it is their job to guard the Magickal Weapons and ritual implements that the participants have placed on or by the altar to be blessed and charged.

**Grand Master:**

The Grand Master then announces:

*“The field of battle is the warrior’s sacred space. Let us now link land and sky of our field of battle in the mundane world to the Otherworlds. The field of action of the warrior is the mundane world.”*

**Quarters**:

**Marshall**: Raises sword and invokes:

*“Hail! Guardians of the East*

*Of the Land of Falias*

*Elementals of Air.*

*Sylphs of the dawn sky.*

*Spirits of windy mornings in spring.*

*Yours is the Sword of Justice*

*The razor edged blade that cuts through illusions*

*I do summon stir and call ye up.*

*That you may witness, protect and bless these rites.*

*Let us be happy and hospitable in the name of Brigid.*

*By the sword of Nuada Argetlamh!*

*My Law is to will*

*Breathe of me deeply*

*Biodh Se!”*

**Standard Beare**r: Raises sticks/staff and invokes:

*“Hail! Guardians of the South!*

*Of the Land of Gorias*

*Elementals of Fire.*

*Salamanders of the midday sun.*

*Spirits of golden summer afternoons.*

*Yours is the Spear of Truth*

*The spear that pierces to the heart of the matter*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That you may witness, protect and bless these rites.*

*Let us play music and share knowledge in the name of Grian.*

*By the spear of Lugh Lamfhada!*

*My law is to dream.*

*Live of me Fully*

*Biodh Se!”*

**Quartermaster**: Raises grail and invokes:

*“Hail! Guardians of the West!*

*The Land of Murias*

*Elementals of Water.*

*Undines of the sunset waters.*

*Spirits of misty Autumn evenings.*

*Yours is the Chalice of Passion*

*The Grail the strips away the veils.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may witness, protect and bless these rites.*

*Let us teach and judge fairly in the name of Boann.*

*By the undry cauldron of the Dagdha Eochaid!*

*My Law is to dare*

*Drink of me Freely*

*Biodh Se!”*

**Under Marshall**: Raises shield and invokes:

*“Hail! Guardians of the North!*

*The Land of Finias*

*Elementals of Earth.*

*Gnomes of the midnight mountains.*

*Spirits of silent Winter nights.*

*Yours is the Stone of Kingship,*

*The sacred altar that holds power, wisdom and destiny.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may witness, protect and bless these rites.*

*Grant us strength and confidence in the name of the Mor-Rhioghain.*

*By the stone of Lia Fail and the anvil of Goibhniu!*

*My Law is silence*

*Listen to me in stillness*

*Biodh Se!”*

***Constable****:*

*“Hail! Guardians of Meath! The Center.*

*Spirits of the Wheel of the Seasons.*

*Aes Sidhe of the Timeless Astral.*

*Dreams of the eternal Summerland.*

*Yours is the power of Spirit.*

*The mind which wields the elemental powers as one.*

*I do summon, stir and call ye up,*

*That ye may bring us unity, stability and balance.*

*Grant us healing and peace in the name of Danu.*

*By the eloquence of Ogma*

*My law is unity.*

*Know of me always.*

*Biodh Se!”*

These five Commandery members then set their weapons down behind them or tuck them away to allow them to participate in the Circle casting that follows.

**Circle casting**:

The Seneschal then leads the participants through the “hand to hand” method of Circle casting that we use for our initiation rituals. It is a very simple procedure. The Circle is cast, starting with the Marshall in the east: The Marshall places his left palm onto the upraised right palm of the person on his left, saying:

*“Hand to hand I cast this circle.”*

Each person in turn grasps the hand of the person to their left and repeats this phrase as they do so. This goes around the circle deosil until we get back around to the Marshall in the east. When everyone is holding hands The Seneschal announces:

*“It is joined.”*

As I mentioned earlier, we are not trying to separate ourselves from the mundane world with this procedure. We are simply joining ourselves together into one group with a single purpose.

**Gods/Sidhe**:

The Grand Master and Seneschal then call out the warrior Gods to witness the ceremony using their own words. The Grand Master (if male) calls Gods and if female calls Goddesses. The Seneschal (if female) calls Goddesses and if male calls Gods.

**Ancestors/The Fallen:**

The Constable now announces a moment of silence for fallen ancestors, using her own words. If possible, we’ll get a piper or bugler for this moment of silence. At the conclusion the Constable will call upon the participants to direct their thoughts to Pagans now in the field serving and guarding their community. Once this moment of remembrance is over, the Constable says:

*“They are remembered.”*

**Casting Out Faults Ritual**:

The Constable will direct the participants to cast out fears, faults or bad fortune by leading the participants through three Chi Gong techniques: Shaking free, draw in and toss, and washing the bones. Everyone faces outward from the circle. Then the participants standing with their feet at shoulder width and shaking their hands at their sides, the shaking progressing to their elbows, their shoulders, and ultimately their whole body. This they do three times. The second has the participants imagine peeling free the things they wish to be rid of and casting them away from the Circle. This will allow the participants to rid themselves of anything they wish to leave behind them as they move forward on this Warrior path. Finally the participants “wash the bones” by drawing healing energy downwards and then upwards through themselves. The participants then turn back to face into the middle of the Circle.

**Claiming Your Power:**

**Grand Master**: *“Those of you who were victims, repeat after me: I’m still standing! I’m still standing! I’m still standing!”*

Participants repeat these words.

**Grand Master**: *“Those of you who lacked self respect, repeat after me: I am glorious! I am glorious! I am glorious!”*

Participants repeat these words.

**Grand Master**: *“Those of you who feared, repeat after me: I am a warrior! I am a warrior! I am a warrior!”*

Participants repeat these words.

**Charging of Magickal Weapons**:

This portion of the ritual will reflect the seven principles of Bushido that I mentioned earlier:

1. Chu: Duty and Loyalty.

2. Gi: Justice and Morality.

3. Makoto: Complete Sincerity.

4.Rei: Polite Courtesy.

5. Jin: Compassion.

6. Yu: Heroic Courage.

7. Meiyo: Honor.

What we are about to do here is have the participants charge their Magical Weapons. Immediately following this they’re going to reclaim these Magickal Weapons and take the Armoring oath. Thus they’ll have symbolically cast out their faults/fears (the casting out ritual from earlier) and armed themselves to prevent their return.

The Grand Master will direct the participants in how to use the Kiai to project energy at their Magical Weapons to charge them. This is something that I described in Full Contact Magick: Those of you who have done martial arts will be familiar with this. Basically I want to reinforce the idea of sending energy instantly instead of going through a lengthy performance to raise it. Having instructed the participants, one of the warriors will shout out one of the seven principles of Bushido in Japanese, followed by the Seneschal calling out it’s meaning in English, followed by the Grand Master leading the participants in a Kiai. So it will go like this:

**Marshall**: “*Chu*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Duty and Loyalty*!”

First Kiai

**Under Marshall**: “*Gi*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Justice and Morality*!”

Second Kiai

**Standard Bearer**: “*Makoto*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Complete Sincerity*!”

Third Kiai

**Quartermaster**: “*Rei*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Polite Courtesy*!”

Fourth Kiai

**First Sergeant at Arms**: “*Jin*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Compassion*!”

Fifth Kiai

**Second Sergeant at A**rms: “*Yu*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Heroic Courage*!”

Sixth Kiai

**Constable**: “*Meiyo*!”

**Seneschal**: “*Honor*!”

Last Kiai

**Returning Weapons**:

The Grand Master and Seneschal now return the Magickal Weapons that people have left to be charged. They pick up each one from where they have been placed by the altar and hold it aloft and ask who owns it. When the person who owns it makes themselves known, the Grand Master or Seneschal returns it to that person, pressing the item firmly and heavily into their hands, saying:

*“Receive this from the hands of the Goddess, and know that you are welcome in this company.”*

**Armoring**:

The Constable administers the Armoring oath to the participants. This Armoring oath was adapted from Ian Corrigan's "The Armoring", which he wrote for the ADF. It is also known as "The Deer's Cry", and I am using it with his permission. Corrigan was inspired by "The Breastplate of St. Patrick". The Constable starts by reminding the participants:

“This ceremony offers a choice: It is a chance to decide your future. It is a chance to take charge of your life to make it what you want. It is a chance to dedicate yourself to this path, to affirm your willingness to take on challenges and be glorious.”

The Constable then leads the participants and warriors in the Armoring oath. The participants repeat each line after the Constable calls them out:

*“Today I gird myself with triple power*

*Invocation of the Gods;*

*Attunement with the Spirits;*

*Reverence to the Ancestors.*

*Today I gird myself with the Power of the Magic Cauldron*

*With the power of the Spear and Sword,*

*and the Stone of Sovereignty.*

*With the whole company of the Mother's Kin*

*Today I gird myself with the Power of the Noble Ones*

*Obedience of Spirits, service of the Sidhe*

*With the loving blessing of the Dead.*

*Wisdom of the wise, courage of the strong, innocence of the young*

*And the deeds of heroes.*

*Today I gird myself with the Power of the Heavens*

*Light of the Sun, brilliance of the Moon, speed of Lightning;*

*Swiftness of Wind, depths of the Sea, firmness of Earth*

*Hardness of Rock*

*And the Power Under the Earth*

*Today I gird myself*

*With the Goddess' Power to direct me*

*With the Gods' Wisdom to bear me up*

*With the Child's Love to content me*

*Their eyes to look after me, their ears to hear from me,*

*Their voice to clarify for me, their hand to guard me,*

*Their paths open before me, their shield to ward me,*

*From habit and unmindfulness, from all who wish me ill*

*Far or near.*

*I summon these Powers to be upon me and in me, to make me equal to any challenge:*

*To come between me and any power that threatens my body or spirit:*

*That I may have the wisdom of the wise, the love of the loving, the power of the powerful;*

*That I may be known in the Inner Realms and acknowledged with honor.*

*Know me. O Mighty Ones, for my name is .*..(name of participant)

*Magic within me, magic on my right hand, magic behind me;*

*Magic on my left hand, magic before me, magic above me, magic beneath me.*

*In the eye of all beholders, in the ear of all who hear*

*In the heart of all beings*

*My magic is established.*

*Today I gird myself with the three fold power*

*Honor to the Gods! Honor to the Fair Folk! Honor to the Dead!*

*And honor to the spirit*

*That dwells in me forever*

*Biodh Se!”*

**Dedication to the Warrior Gods**:

Once the Armoring Oath has taken place, the dedication of the warrior Gods takes place. The Grand Master instructs the participants:

*“At this time each Paladins member will dedicate themselves to a warrior aspect of divinity, starting with the eastern warrior and going around the Circle sunwise, then proceeding to the Sergeants at Arms, the Constable, the Grand Master and the Seneschal.”*

Each warrior holds aloft their Magickal Weapon and makes their dedication to the warrior deities.

**Closing the Circle**:

Seneschal and Grand Master thank the Gods and bid them farewell in their own words.

**Quarter Closing:**

**Constable**:

*“Guardians of the Center.*

*Guardians of Spirit.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Under Marshall**:

*“Guardians of the North.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Quartermaster**:

*“Guardians of the West.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Standard Bearer**:

*“Guardians of the South.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Marshall**:

*“Guardians of the South.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

The Commandery then reforms the two lines at the entrance to the Circle.

**Grand Master**:

*“The Circle is open, yet unbroken. The Circle is ended, but never the trust within. Go forth now into the world and run straight for whatever you fear the most.”*

The participants now file out between the lines of the Commandery members. A celebratory feast follows.