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**Order of Paladins**

**Yule Ritual 2013**

Things needed: a Yule Log bored with holes to hold candles. One candle for each participant plus a candle in a holder that can be passed around.

Celebrants form up in a circle centered on the altar. The Commandery files into the Circle from the East in order of rank. The five Commandery members calling the quarters go to their respective quarters or positions: Standard Bearer south, Constable east, Quartermaster west, Sergeant at Arms north. The Marshall stands directly south of the altar and the Under Marshall and Squire side by side on the north side of the altar. The Grand Master stands to the east of the altar and the Seneschal stands to the west side of the altar.

**Standard Bearer**:

The Standard Bearer raises the Order of Paladins banner and says:

*“In Hoc Signo Vinces!”*

**Squire**:

The Squire lights two altar candles and places them on the north side of the altar in honor of the Fair Folk, saying:

*“Dark and ancient spirits who rule the wild spaces, who dwell even now in the far reaches and secret corners of this world, Pukas and Sidhe who would rule again, we light this flame in remembrance of You, and invite You to take of it what warmth You will.”*

**Under Marsh**all:

The Squire then hands the sword to the Under Marshall, who raises it in a warding gesture and turns in a circle deosil, banishing negative energy, saying:

*“Avaunte! Avaunte! Maleficum defense! Honi soit qui mal y pense!”*

The Under Marshall then returns the sword to the altar and takes up position south of the Altar.

**Quarter Calls**:

At this point five Commandery members at the quarters of the Circle (Sergeant at Arms, Constable, Quartermaster, Standard Bearer and the Marshall) call the quarters. The Commandery member calling the quarter should face inward to face the rest of the assembled company, while all of the other participants turn in the direction of the quarter being called. This positions the Commandery member calling the quarter so that they are facing the rest of the coven. This makes them easier to hear in a large group, especially if the ritual involves a large number of participants. The Marshall, calling on spirit, is in the center of the Circle, and for this part everyone faces inward.

**Constable**:

The Constable calls the east quarter:

*“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!”*

**Squire**:

The Squire then lights incense in the censer, saying the following line from Horace's *Odes*:

*“It is the mountaintop that lightning strikes.”*

The Squire then takes the censer to the Constable in the east. The Constable then censes the Circle deosil around to east again, saying:

*“Wind wind around*

*Make walls as sound*

*As it were bound.”*

The Squire then returns the censer to the altar.

**Standard Bearer**:

The Standard Bearer then calls the south quarter:

*“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!”*

**Squire**:

The Squire then lights the third altar candle or a fire in the cauldron on or by the altar, saying:

*“Branch, burn; fire, flame; Goibhniu, forge the sword again.”*

The Squire takes the Standard Bearer’s flag staff or Magickal Weapon and holds it for them while the Standard Bearer makes a deosil circuit of the Circle, saying:

*“Bright fire stay*

*What comes this way*

*Keep dark away.”*

The Squire then returns the flag staff or Magickal Weapon to the Standard Bearer and takes the cauldron from the Standard Bearer and returns it to the altar.

**Quartermaster**:

The Quartermaster then calls the west quarter:

*“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!”*

**Squire**:

At the Altar the Squire prepares a mixture of salt, oil, water, and leaf, representing the gifts of the earth. The Squire elevates each element before she adds it to the charging bowl. The Squire then says:

*“Three from me of five alive by nine makes mine.”*

The Squire takes this charging bowl to the Quartermaster, who then goes deosil inside the circle of people, and asperges everyone in the circle, including herself, saying:

*“Wild waves so tall*

*Make us a wall*

*Our foes forestall.”*

The squire then retrieves the charging bowl and returns it to the altar.

**Sergeant at Arms**:

The Sergeant at Arms now calls the north quarter:

*“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 Morrighan.*

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

*My Law is silence*

*Listen to me in stillness*

*Biodh Se!”*

The Squire takes the shield to the Sergeant at Arms in the north and presents it to him, saying this line from Matthew Green's 1737 *The Spleen*:

*“Fling but a stone and the giant dies.”*

The Sergeant at Arms takes it and goes around the circle deosil, starting in the north, saying:

*“Stone rise from sleep*

*and shield this keep*

*with ramparts steep.”*

The Squire then returns the stone/shield to the altar and takes up station again north of the altar. If a shield is not available a stone or pentacle may be used. The Order of Paladins has a number of special stones that we use in Circle for this purpose.

**Marshall**:

*The Marshall then calls the center:*

*“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!”*

The Marshall then directs the participants to raise energy to form the energy sphere or ward that is the Circle. In the Order of Paladins, we use one of two methods for this. One is called “holding the ball”: The participant raises their arms in front of them as if holding a large ball and forms a ball of energy between them, finally allowing this energy sphere to expand to encompass the ritual area. The other is called “pushing sky”: The participant allows the energy to rise within them, raising their arms overhead and allowing it to stream out and cascade down around the ritual area, forming the energy sphere. Both of these are described in my book Magickal Self Defense.

Once this spherical energy ward has been created, the Marshall recites the following Paganized version of "God be with us" from the *Carmina Gadelica*:

*“The circle is cast.*

*Anything that is evil to us,*

*Or that may witness against us*

*Where we shall longest be,*

*Illume it to us,*

*Obscure it to us,*

*Banish it from us,*

*Root it out of our hearts,*

*Ever, evermore, everlastingly,*

*Ever, evermore, everlastingly.”*

**Grand Master**:

The Squire hands the Grand Master the sword. The Grand Master raises the sword and declares:

*“The circle is cast by air and fire;*

*The circle is charged by water and earth.*

*What is within the circle is between the worlds;*

*A place that is nowhere and everywhere.*

*A place of power.*

*What is between the worlds does not concern the world.”*

*Then everyone says together:*

*“But can change the world.”*

NOTE: This was adapted from an invocation that I learned from my NROOGD (New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn) training. I've added the lines "a place that is nowhere and everywhere" and "a place of power."

The Grand Master then salutes the four quarters, in the order east, south, west, north, saying:

*“Nuada, be our sword.*

*Dagda, be our wand.*

*Brigid, be our cup.*

*Morrighan, be our pentacle.”*

The Grand Master then returns the sword to the altar.

**Blessings**:

At this point the Seneschal blesses the participants in the ritual, using the following declaration adapted from a resting prayer (#43) from the Carmina Gadelica:

*“May our Gods shield the house, the fire, the kine,*

*Every one who dwells herein tonight.*

*Shield myself and this beloved group,*

*Preserve us from violence and from harm;*

*Preserve us from foes this night,*

*In this place, and in every place wherein they dwell tonight,*

*On this night and on every night,*

*This night and every night.”*

**Warrior’s Admonition**:

The Grand Master, Seneschal, Marshall and Under Marshall now recite the Warrior’s Admonition to the members of the Order of Paladins. Each one picks up a Magickal Weapon from the altar: The Grand Master takes the sword, the Seneschal takes the grail, the Marshall takes the wand or staff, and the Under Marshall takes the shield or stone. They then stand around the altar facing the quarters appropriate to their magickal weapons.

**Grand Master**:

*“Your body is your temple: Care for it!*

*Do not engage in useless activity.*

*Listen to the Goddess.*

*Help thyself.*

*You create your own reality.”*

**Seneschal**:

*“The Warrior’s path is creativity.*

*A serene path to enlightenment.*

*Know thyself.*

*Master thyself.*

*Create your own reality.”*

**Marshall**:

*“Nurture the ability to perceive the truth in all matters.*

*Perceive that which cannot be seen with the eye.*

*Learn from your mistakes.*

*Teach thyself.*

*Create your own reality.”*

**Under Marshall**:

*“Do not be negligent, even in trifling matters*

*Grace and guilt do not exist:*

*Strive for responsibility.*

*Honor thyself.*

*Create your own reality.”*

**All four together**:

*“Never disgrace the Goddess, the God, nor Wicca.*

*Do not harbor sinister designs*

*Harm none, do what thou wilt.*

*Master thyself.*

*Create your own reality.”*

**Calling on Warrior Aspects**

The Grand Master and Seneschal now call upon aspects of warrior divinity to be manifested among the participants in the ritual in their own words.

**Ancestors**:

The Marshall now announces a moment of silence for fallen ancestors. At the conclusion of this moment of silence, the Marshall will call upon the participants to direct their thoughts to Pagans now in the field serving and guarding their community. This remembrance is concluded by saying:

*“They are remembered.”*

**Bringing Back the Light**:

**Grand Master**: “*The longest night and shortest day at the apex of the season of darkness has always been a time when people reenact myths explaining the cycle of darkness of light of the seasons of the Earth. The darkness often is used as a metaphor for the want and depression and conflict which are often amplified in the cold dark Shield Season. Often the myths concern a figure of light or solar divinity bringing back light to banish the darkness. Their light often represents the giving and caring and service which can drive out ignorance and hatred and greed. . Lords and Ladies of Light and Dark battle endlessly, maintaining the balance of nature.”*

**Seneschal**: “*In our Yule ritual the Seneschal reminds the participants that our precepts and code of chivalry stand as examples, guiding us to face or fears and deal with challenges and obstacles, which often occur in cycles as do the seasons. By standing as examples, we light the way for those who follow us, banishing the darkness, using our service to relieve suffering and bring hope. This is my challenge: In the coming season, as the light of the sun returns, how will you light the darkness? What will you do for yourself, for kith and kin, for the greater community, and for the earth to make life better? This is the shield season. How will you shield yourself and others from the darkness? Who here will carry the torch? Who will be the light?”*

The Seneschal takes a candle and hands it to the first person in the Circle in the East and the Seneschal says:

*“(Name) will you hold the light?”*

The person takes the candle and tells the assembled company how they will live according to the precepts and code of chivalry to help “spread the light” for others during the coming year. When that person finishes they take the candle and light a candle on the Yule Log stating:

*“I will shine.”*

The person who has just held the candle now turns and challenges the next warrior in Circle:

*“Will you hold the light?”*

The process repeats itself until all members of the Circle have lit their candles on the Yule Log.

**Song of Paladins**:

At this point in the ritual, each of the members present calls out their “I am” phrase in turn.

This is immediately followed by all present reciting together the following final lines adapted from the Song of Amergin:

*“Who spreads light in the gathering on the hills?*

*Who knows the ages of the moon?*

*Who but I knows the dark secret of the dolmen not yet hewn?*

*Who knows where the setting sun rests?*

*Who took the cattle from the house of the war crow?*

*Who pleases the war crow's cattle?*

*What bull, what god created the mountain skyline?*

*The cutting word, the cold word*

*I am the womb*

*Of every hold*

*I am the blaze*

*On every hill*

*I am the queen*

*Of every hive*

*I am the shield*

*To every head*

*I am the spear of battle*

*I am the ninth wave of eternal return*

*I am the tomb to every bone.*

*I can be your ally,*

*Yet I can be your worst fear.*

*I am a Paladin.”*

**Magickal Working:**

At this point in the ritual, the Order of Paladins does any magick or seasonal ritual that needs doing.

**Agape**:

The Grand Master and Seneschal take a platter covered with cakes from the altar and together hold a wand over them, saying the following lines from the poetry of Sappho:

“*I am a fountain in the sun;*

*I am a fragrance in the night;*

*I am a fire beneath the skin.*

*Of earth and air we eat,*

*And are made complete.”*

NOTE: You should note that the above purposefully invokes all five senses.

They share a cake, and the Seneschal passes the plate to the east, where it the plate is passed deosil around the Circle. As each person passes to the next, they say:

*“May you never hunger.”*

The Grand Master and Seneschal then face each other and hold a full chalice between them. The both hold the athame point down over it and lower athame point-down into the cup, saying:

*“Be it known that man is not greater than woman, nor is woman greater than man, but when joined, become one in truth, for there is no greater magick in all the world than that of love.”*

Both then sip from the cup before passing pass it to the circle of participants, starting in the east. As it is handed to each person, the person handing the chalice says:

*“May you never thirst.”*

The cup continues around the circle with the same greeting.

**Order Business**:

This is the stage in the ritual where we make announcements about scheduling and member’s achievements and so on.

**Grounding**:

At this time we ground out any surplus energy created during the ritual. You can find grounding techniques in my book *Magickal Self Defense*.

**Taking Leave of the Warrior Deities**:

The Grand Master and Seneschal thank the Warrior deities that they have called upon and take their leave of them. They use their own words for this.

**Quarter Closing**:

The persons who called the quarters now dismiss them in turn.

**Marshall**:

*“Guardians of the Center.*

*Guardians of Spirit.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Sergeant at Arms**:

*“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.”*

**Constable**:

*“Guardians of the East.*

*We thank you for your attendance.*

*We bid you hail and farewell.”*

**Closing**:

The Grand Master concludes the ritual, saying:

*“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. Maher Shalal Hash Baz! Be glorious!”*

All: *“Merry Meet, Merry Part, and Merry Meet Again.”*

The Standard Bearer retrieves the Order of Paladins banner and the Commandery troops out in order of rank, followed by the celebrants. Later the Grand Master and Seneschal take offerings from the chalice and pentacle to the garden for the spirits. Celebrants and Commandery can join them for this if desired.