

## **Slavic Spring Equinox Ritual**

Written by Z.L. Bennett

For Ritual on March 26, 2006

(For Papi)

### **Chimes begin the Rite (3x3)**

**Invoking the Protector:** *A Druid Standing North speaks:*

D1: Mighty Perun (Pye-ROON), keeper of the lightning bolt and keeper of the axe, protector of your people from all harm. We are linked with you as lovers of the oaks and we ask your assistance.

We call upon you and Slava, bird of glory, to hold at bay any known or unknown energies, including those within, that would not uphold us and support us in this rite. O bright one that strikes, keep at bay these energies, so that we may enter this sacred space in complete safety and peace. (*Offering – vodka and seeds*)

**Treating with the Outdwellers:** *a Druid standing South lights a flame and speaks:*

D1: Ancient Chaos, Wild, Dark, and Daunting Ones,  
You who are unknown or known to us as the “Other,”  
We acknowledge your lessons, power, and will.  
You have stood firm against the gods and Order.  
Respected are you for your movement outside our knowing, and we offer to you  
in honor, as is our way. We ask that you trouble not our work at this time,  
nor the energy for prosperity and good engendered here.  
(*Offering - grain*).

*(PD Purifies Nemeton by sprinkling sea salt in a counterclockwise circle around the perimeter as Outdwellers are being addressed. Then, PD scatters salt within the Nemeton in a clockwise direction.)*

PD: You may now enter the Nemeton.

**Processional:** We Approach the Sacred Grove

**Setting Historical Precedence – Statement:**

PD: We are the gods’ and the gods are ours, so let us pray with a good fire. Let us offer with a full heart, knowing that when we do, we nurture our connection to them and support the very gods themselves. In remembrance, we strengthen their powers. In honor, we balance the worlds. In love, we bring peace and keep the Old Ways present and alive.

**Grounding and Attunement:**

PD: As we have entered into this sacred space, let us now center and prepare ourselves for this rite and this work. Let us take a moment of silence for all present to focus on their breath and to use their tools for grounding. *(Lead through the two-powers and then tone and/or link hands for vertical attunement. Then, bring unified focus back to the Nemeton).*

### **Purification of Participants:**

PD2: Centered, we now purify ourselves and align with the elements.

*Cense (using amber or other solar fragrance) and Asperse (with a mixture of salt water) as the participants chant.*

**Purification Chant:** The Well, the fire and the Tree  
Do flow and flame and grow in me  
As I do will it, so shall it be.  
Slava, Slava, Destiny.

### **Honoring the Earth Mother:**

PD: We are here to celebrate the arrival of spring, our Mother's honeyed gifts. Let us take a moment to acknowledge her and to send her our gratitude and love for all that she continually provides. Please kneel and touch the earth. Feel her kindness and the moistness of life *(pause briefly)* and send back to her your love and thanks through your hands, as this druid so offers:

D1: Great Mother of many names, the center of our life and abundance.  
You known as Matushka Zyemlyah (zyem-LYAH), Moist Mother Earth,  
Beloved are you among your people.  
Each day do you give without questioning,  
Each day does your beauty win hearts and praise.  
Honored are we to stand in your presence;  
Honored are we to feel your ancient, blessed pulse within us and all things.  
(offering of flowers and water)

Slava tebe!  
Thanks and praise be to you from all the good folk!  
O Matka! Primi nashe podayanie! (Pri-MI Na-she po-da-YA-ni-ye)  
Great Mother! We ask that you join us.

Accept our offering! ALL: Accept our offering!  
Da budet tak! (Let it be so). ALL: Da budet tak! (Dah BOOdyet tak)

### **Invoking Inspiration:**

PD: We now call upon the powers of inspiration to aid us in our rite.

D1: Swarozhicz (shvar-OH-veech), Son of he who cannot be addressed.

Your divine fire, inspiration, and intercession, is that for which we ask.

O divine craftsman, creator, shapeshifter,

Carry our words, thoughts, oaths, and deeds in favor to the gods.

May your glory inspire us always. (*offering of oil or clarified butter*)

Dear Swarozhicz, divining on the winds, join us.

Primi nashe podayanie!

Accept our sacrifice! ALL: Accept our sacrifice!

Da budet tak! (Let it be so). ALL: Da budet tak!

### **Short Statement of Ritual Purpose:**

PD: We have come here today to celebrate the presence of spring and to anticipate the great return of all we have offered in the dark half of the year. We come here to honor the Radiant Lady of the spring, Lada, whose very name means “harmony.” She emerges from her home to take her charge of this season, bringing such beauty in her presence and in her dance, bringing the bounty of love and the blessings of good marriage and relationship. We come to honor her and her loving husband, the noble god, Dazhbog (DAHZDd-book), the giver of wealth and conqueror of shadows, cold, and misery. We also come to ask Simargl, the great winged lion who watches over seeds and new growth, to protect our new endeavors.

Happy are they who call themselves the grandchildren of Lada and Dazhbog, as do the stars and the people of the Slavic realms. In great joy do the peoples of Russia celebrate the return of the birds’ songs and the fertility of spring, in their holidays of Strinennia and Maslenica. In that spirit of joy do we gather today to honor the gifts of the Shining Ones, to waken the race of the “Kindly Ones” from their sleep, and to plant new seeds of hope in our hearts.

### **Consecration of the Hallows:**

PD: Let us now sanctify the Hallows from which we offer. (*Druids addressing the hallows, will create as they are called to, adding any necessary lines to their supplications as shown below*).

**The Well:** Sacred waters flow within us!

(*offering of silver*)

**The Fire:** Sacred flame, burn within us!

(*offering of oil or clarified butter*)

**The Tree:** Sacred Tree, the conductor of Nav, Yav, and Prav,

Grand pillar upon which the majestic Firebird sits  
And the underworld serpent, Zmey, guards below.  
World Tree, grant us your treasures,  
And connect us to the worlds this day.  
*(offering of fragrant oil, incense, and water)*  
Sacred tree, grow within us!

### **Opening the Gates:**

PD: We call now on the Keepers of the Gates, The Zori (ZOHri), to make open the portals for our rite here.

D1: Dear Guardians of the Gates of the Heavens,  
Daughters of the hinges of time and reality,  
Spirited Steed-Riders into the Dawn, Dusk, and Darkest Night,  
You who join disparities into timeless truth  
And guard the world from the terrible hounds.

Who better to ask than you, The Triple Ones,  
The Zori, Guardians of the Worlds,  
To open the portals and to protect us in our rite.  
Radiant and lovely are you, each in your trek to us, and honor be to your Ancestors.  
Cover us with your lustrous veils. Keep us worthy and our steps safe.

*Participants chant "Zori" as druid (or three female druids) wind veil(s) in the Nemeton using movement, building energy. D1: silently offers to each of the hallows during chanting and visualizes them as ready for opening. When the energy is ready D1 says:*

Zori, ot kroite vrata!  
Let the Gates be opened!  
ALL: Let the Gates be opened!

### **The Three Kindreds**

#### **Nature Spirits:**

D1: Duhi prirodi! (DOO-hi Pri-RO-di) Nature Spirits!  
Those of the waters, forests, and fields  
Those that are the wild ones and those of our homes,  
Strong ones, sad ones, and those who joke or swim or sing,  
An alliance we offer you here and in delight we bring these gifts to you.  
*(Offering of flowers or fruit is made.)*  
Grateful are we for your many lessons.  
Grateful are we for all the comfort you grant.

Join us Nature Spirits! Primitye nashe podayanie!  
Accept our offering! ALL: Accept our offering!

**Ancestors:**

D1: Predki! Dear Ancestors!  
Reknown Heroes of our blood and bones!  
Celebrated Kindly Ones of all peoples!  
Loved ones of the hearth, keepers of the family,  
Guardians, patrons, and sages, known and unknown;  
We recognize our bond and kin, and in honor we bring this gift to you.  
*(Offering of drink (vodka) is made to the well).*  
Grateful are we for your many lessons.  
Grateful are we for all the comfort you grant.

Join us Ancestors! Primitye nashe podayanie!  
Accept our offering! ALL: Accept our offering!

**Deities:**

D1: Bozhestva! Glory to you O Exalted Ones! Deities Divine!  
How you shine brightly in the shrines of our hearts!  
How the mighty Bird of Fire coos in your presence!  
How the honey bee offers all its sweetness!  
Your stories sparkle in the waters of all life  
And swim in the primordial ribbons of the cosmos.  
Your treasures and gifts are boundless,  
And in profound respect and love we offer this gift to you.  
*(Offering of oil is made to the fire).*  
Grateful are we for your many lessons.  
Grateful are we for all the comfort you grant.

Join us, Majestic Ones! Primitye nashe podayanie!  
Accept our offering! ALL: Accept our offering!

**Invocation of the Deities to be Honored**

PD: Many welcomes dear Kindred, Triple Hosts of Spirits. Join us now as we call to those who have inspired this rite, those whose charge it is to bring in the gifts of the season.

D1: Dear Lada, keeper of spring, beauty, and love in all hearts. We ask that you join us at this rite for we wish to do you honor, remembering you here. Hail to you great daughter of the sea. Hail to you dear blissful lover. Hail to you great lady of the blossoms, the linden tree, and the ocean's song. *(offering of blossoms or limes)*

D2: Dear Dazhbog, keeper of the days and years, giver of plenty, beloved of Lada. We ask that you join us at this rite for we wish to do you honor, remembering you here. Hail to you Sky-Traveler, Hail to you Golden One of the plains, Hail to you O Light of Life and Conqueror of our secret pains. (*offering of grain*)

D3: Sweet Simargl, winged lion who protects the new seedlings and green things in infancy. We ask that you join us at this rite for we wish to do you honor, remembering you here. Hail to you Protector, Hail to you O lover of growth and change, Hail to you who flies as we wish to, between the worlds. (*offering of a tiny potted plant - to be planted later*)

Shining Ones, primitve nashe podayanie! Accept these offerings in welcome.  
Da budet tak! All: *Repeat.*

### **Praise Offerings:**

PD: At this time, before our work, let any who would offer praise and thanks to their gods here, do so. (*ample time given*)

### **Main Offering: Story/Song**

PD: As our ancestors did before us, so we do now, and may our generations do after us, let us remember the Old Ways and the Old Stories in honor and in offering of this high day. Today, we find delight in the story of Lada and Dazhbog.

#### **I. Story**

*(In the spirit of the season, the story is meant to be read as a children's fairy tale or narrative poem – lightheartedness is the tone to take, focusing first on the aspect of storytelling before the rhyme. The final 2 stanzas' couplets can be emphasized if desired, as an ending).*

#### **Storyteller:**

Once, long ago, there were nine beautiful, graceful daughters,  
Who lived content in deepest grottoes in a blue-green sea.  
The warm waters belonged to Tsar Mora, their proud father,  
The god in whose dominion the great whales danced merrily.

Most favored of the nine was Tsar Mora's beauty, Lada,  
Who loved to sail the ocean in her little golden boat,  
To play in dolphin's laughter and sing ocean songs most odd,  
And creatures who looked upon her, effortlessly did dote.

Overflowing, her sea-soul, its beauty none could compare,  
When she caught the glorious Dazhbog's handsome, keen, young eye.  
Peering from his chariot in the blazing, golden air,

His twelve fire-horses shook, upon his adoring sigh.

Then, Lada gazed up and flashed a glance, all in girlish fun,  
And many men know well that artful flash when it is sent,  
Then, playfully she splashed him, and 'tis then it had begun,  
When Dazhbog deeply loved the things that touched her as she went.

Descending on a crimson sunbeam went the young god to the shore  
Calling on Tsar Mora to petition his heart's dear ardent dream -  
That she, as honored wife, would join him, he so fervently implored,  
But Tsar Mora's seething answer echoed ominous through the sea.

"Unthinkable it is to give my Lada up!" Tsar Mora spat.  
"I summon my kingdom to end this subject and this supplicant!"  
Giant sea horses, they did trample, Giant whales, they did thrash  
And Dazhbog fell senseless to the depths, while Tsar Mora's oceans crashed.

All seemed hopeless and Dazhbog seemed doomed to his unfortunate plight.  
But, as we all know, it is good to be a child of the gods.  
Hearing his son's cries, the divine tsar of the sky blotted out light,  
And Dazhbog broke free, resolved in Lada, no matter what the odds.

Shorter, the tale is told, than time it took for the deed to be done.  
But with his faithful brother who knew the ways to a woman's heart,  
Dazhbog took Lada to his Eastern Palace, and her love was won;  
And he gave his sweet Queen the charge of spring as beauty was her art.

As paragons they stand in love and generosity.  
Blessing new growth, new dreams, new life, in their content felicity.  
Their son Iarilo (yah-REE-loh), god of love, joins in his mother's day,  
He opens the gates for spring to come, and they dance the snow away.

So praise be to you the Sun, that brings the ripening grain,  
And praise be to you the Beauty, that comes from the storms and rain.  
Praise be to you the joy of Love, which dances out the cold,  
And praise be to you the Life of spring, which then dances out the old.

## **II. Song/Dance Offering**

PD: Let us now offer our joy to Lada, joining in her dance of spring. Where her feet tread, the snow melts and the regeneration of spring begins.

O Lada, humbly we ask you dear Lady to summon your son to open the gates of spring in our hearts and to join us here in our song.

### **Slavic Spring Dance Song**

*(1<sup>st</sup> verse repeated in between verse 2 and 3. Dancing takes place on repeated 1<sup>st</sup> verse (3x).  
Dance is circular in a very basic dubke style).*

O Ardent Bee, Little Bee  
O Fly away, upon the Sea  
Take your Key, your Golden Key  
Lock out winter  
(cold winter)  
Unlock summer  
(warm summer)  
A summer fertile in grain.

O Radiant One, Lada be clear,  
your dance of spring is welcome here  
Summon your dancing partner near.  
Dance out winter  
(cold winter)  
Bring in summer  
(warm summer)  
A summer fertile in grain.

(Repeat Verse 1)

O birds on high you now return  
Watching your nests with great concern  
With your spring songs, you all affirm  
Ending winter  
(cold winter)  
Singing summer  
(warm summer)  
A summer fertile in grain.

(Repeat Verse 1 – faster)

Dear Ones! Primitye nashe podayanie! Accept our offering!  
*(offer text of story and song to the fire)*  
Da budet tak! ALL: Repeat

### **Call for Final Offerings:**

PD: If there are any final offerings to be made, let them be made at this time.  
*(Ample time given.)*



If there are any of the Kindreds who we have not mentioned, any who we have unknowingly offended, we humbly ask your pardon and give this offering as a token of our sincere regret.  
*(offering of oil)*

Dear Kindreds we have given of our love, time, and resources. May our voices and hearts be heard. We thank you for the promise of spring and we offer in return our love, devotion, and respect, as we entreat you – Shining Ones, accept our sacrifice.

PD: Da budet tak All: *Repeat*

### **Taking of the Omen:**

PD: Having made offering to the Kindred, let us open to their voices, asking them what further wisdom and blessings they wish to impart to us.

Divination: Ovomancy is used *(egg whites dripped into a scrying bowl or cauldron filled with hot water. A system of symbols will be used (as in reading of coffee grounds) rather than looking for full pictures).*

### **Work and Meditation:**

PD: Spring is the time when birds are nesting and producing eggs, and so, it is no wonder that so many cultural holidays during this time of year have the egg as their central symbol. This symbol connects so many stories heard around the world that use the metaphor of the *World Egg*, where great golden birds and the sun play a part in the creation or the hatching of the worlds. In days of old, as winter was beginning its thaw, eggs were central to survival and a welcome addition to our ancestors' diet. So the "egg hunts" were also literally connected to life itself, and then as now, the egg is significant to folk traditions and ritual use.

A prime example of the egg taking center stage is seen in the Slavic/Ukrainian tradition of *krashanka* or *pysanky*. These elaborately decorated eggs are still prized worldwide. In the times of heathendom, they primarily used the colors of the sun for their eggs and used various motifs and patterns on them to serve as talismans for such things as protection, bounty, and health. They were to be handled carefully, as they were decorated raw, and after they were eaten in the morning, the shells were taken to a nearby river to send a message to a race of spirits called the "Kindly Ones" who lived in the dark banks of the rivers of the world. The shells happily announced that the season of the sun and rebirth had returned to the earth.

So too, it is with the egg that we will do our work today. Here, in the presence of Lada, Dahzbog, Jarilo, Simargl, and all our Kindreds and Allies, we will fertilize an egg of promise and of dreams, promises and dreams that will serve ourselves, our pagan community, and our world. Before you, are eggs colored as the colors of the sun. Choose one to hold in your hands for this work. *(Basket of eggs is passed around by druid.)*

**Meditation:** *(As written or as journey speaks, pausing as needed)*

Take a moment again to get comfortable and to breathe and focus yourself. Ask your guides and ask yourself, what one dream, what project, what healing, what virtue, are you ready to bring to germination in your life. What one thing above all else calls for your creation in the turning of this year? - Now, fertilize the egg in your hands by imbuing it with your goal-seed. Breathe into it. Send your energy into it through your body, from the earth and from the heavens. Send your thought like a ray of sun penetrating the hard shell of your personal barriers and let it permeate into the fertile potential of your egg and find its place.

Ask now, what one dream, what project, what healing, what virtue, what energy, what commitment, are you ready to bring forth into your spiritual community and family. Plant your vision into the egg in your hands with all your being and all the forces lending themselves in this moment. Send your thought as a ray of sun penetrating the hard shell of fear or lethargy. Let it permeate into the fertile potential of your egg and find its place.

Finally, in the sacred of the three, ask now what one dream, what project, what healing, what virtue, what energy, what commitment, what act are you ready to foster in the world. What breath of spring can you share in even a small corner of it? Take your vision into the World Egg in your hands with all your being, energy, and intent. Send your thought as a ray of sun penetrating the dark waters and the hard shell of perceived reality. Let it permeate into the fertile potential of your egg and find its place.

See your three goal-seeds in your World Egg building energy, light, and strength. Let it grow until it dances and hums in your hands. Here is the center, the omphalos, the points that meet into wholeness. Here the world sings with potential in your hands. Filled with its promise in your mind's eye, decorate your egg. Place designs that protect, empower, create, remove, or restore. Craft it as a fine artisan, glowing with joy in your work, beauty, and loving intent. When it is crafted, present it to the gods. Lift it to them in offering as we request their blessings. (All lifting eggs up).

**Offering:**

Simargl, we offer you our young, trembling dreams, great winged-lion. O guardian and protector of seedlings and new green beginnings, we ask that you protect our vision and the seedlings we have planted here. Grant us the unwavering commitment to our growth as the sun, earth, and waters are committed to nurture all nature.

Iarilo, we offer to you the field of worlds we have planted here. Guardian of renewal and the fields, protect our vows and our yields.

Lada and Dadz bog, we offer to you and to all the worlds our promises and dreams for the year. May they serve to nurture and never to harm. Surround them with your blessings, beauty, and love.

These World Eggs are now charged for your creation. You can eat them now or later, but as you do, remember what you are taking within. Remember to keep the shells and to send them to the Kindly Ones by placing them in a creek, river, or water. If you wish to, you may also place the shells here in the well and we will safely transport them to the waters for you.

### **The Blessings – Return Flow**

D1: Ancient Allies and Mighty Ones, we strive to honor you. We pray you honor us in return. As the tide turns, we ask that you hear your children. Shining Ones, give us the waters! (*sending spoken words and intent into the cup*)\*

ALL: Shining Ones, give us the waters!

D2: We rejoice in the renewal of spring on the earth and in our purpose. From the seeds that we carry, from the well, the fire, and the tree, let our voice resound. Shining Ones, give us the waters! \*

ALL: Shining Ones, give us the waters!

D3: We open our hearts to your blessings and we happily stand in friendship, honor, and peace with you. Hear us and grant us your favor! Shining Ones, give us the waters!\*

ALL: Shining Ones, give us the waters!

PD: (with focused intent, then takes the cup to proclaim) Behold, the Waters of Life!

### **Thanking the Kindred:**

PD: As the Mighty Ones have blessed us, let us offer thanks to the powers we have honored here.

D: Dear Lada, Dazhbog, and Iarilo, for your joyful presence here, mi vas blagodarim. We thank you. ALL: We thank you!

D: Sweet and powerful Simargl, for nurturing our dreams here, mi tebya blagodarim. We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Bozhestva, Deities, for your blessings and lessons, mi vas blagodarim. We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Predki, Ancestors, for your love and presence, mi vas blagodarim. We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Duhi Prirodi, Nature Spirits, for your strength and beauty, mi vas blagodarim.  
We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Swarozhicz, for your guidance and inspiration, mi tebya blagodarim.  
We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Perun and the Great Bird Slava, for your aid and protection here, mi vas blagodarim.  
We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

D: Matka, Matushka Zyemlyah, called by many names as the Great Mother of the Earth, happy are we to be your children. To you, we return all the blessings we could not carry here. Uphold us now in this world and in peace as you have done in this rite. Mi tebya blagodarim. We thank you! ALL: We thank you!

### **Closing the Gates:**

PD: We call on the Zori once more to close the gates.

D1: Dear sisters three, glorious ones of the sky  
Keepers of the portals of time and dimensions.  
Guardians of the Worlds and the veils between them.  
Thankful are we that you joined in our will, opening the threshold of Truth.  
Thankful are we that you kept vigil over our steps.  
And so we say, mi tebya blagodarim. We thank you!

Now we ask, comely riders, that you return the veils to their place  
*(ladies with veils move about slowly)* and join us in closing the gates once more.  
Let the Well, Fire, and Tree now be but reminders of the glory  
That dwell around and within us.  
Radiant Zori, Wondrous Ladies,  
Zakroite vrata! Let the Gates be Closed! *(moving veils stop & are held high together)*

ALL: Let the Gates be Closed!

PD: As we started, so let us end. (3x3 chimes are sounded).  
Good folk of the Old Ways, the rite is at its end, let us go in fellowship, blessings,  
and peace.

### **Recessional and Revelry**

**Items needed for rite:** *(not including basic ritual items)*

Oil and/or clarified butter

Vodka (or cognac)

Seeds (or birdseed)

Grain

Sea salt

Amber incense

Flowers (earth mother)

Flowers or fruit (nature spirits)

Blossoms or limes (Lada)

Grain (different type for Deity)

Small potted plant

Hardboiled eggs (colors: red, orange, yellow) #to match anticipated participants

Srying bowl or cauldron

Hot water in thermos

Towel

Three colored raw eggs (one of each color above)

Basket for eggs