

Purpose of this Dozhynky

PD: **DO**bre po**LUD**nie i wi**TAJA** do Do**ZHYN**ky! (Good afternoon and welcome to the Dozhynky!) Please be seated. Today we celebrate the turning of the Wheel from Summer to Autumn, and mark the harvest season with a Slavic ritual and feast called a Dozhynky. This was a time of joyful thanks for the bountiful harvest which would sustain the ancient Slavs through the Winter. The Dozhynky occurred in the middle of the ancient Slavic year, so they left behind long days of sunshine, warmth and green life, and entered a time of lengthening nights, chilly breezes, and richly-colored fall foliage. This was a time for sharing crisp apples, telling stories around the fire, and returning to crafts set aside for the growing season. This was Autumn in the world of the ancient Slavs. It was said that harvesting the crops represented a sacrifice of the living plants, and a sacrificial death of their Patron, Jarilo, God of Fertility, Vegetation and Spring. In times past the Slavs observed this change of seasons with a ritual commemorating the departure of Jarilo across the sea to Veles's underworld domain of Virey from whence He had come at the time of the Maslenitza or death of Winter. Jarilo was met by Marzhanna, newly reborn Goddess of Harvest, Witchcraft, Winter, and Death. They were betrothed at the Spring Equinox, courted each other and married at the Summer Solstice. While they cared for each other, the fields grew rich with grains that would soon be harvested and milled into flour. Upon the mowing of the stalks of grain, Jarilo is sacrificed to provide food for both humans and animals, the mortal children of Matka Ziema (Mother Earth.) Marzhanna is overwhelmed by grief and loneliness and as time goes on, and the world begins to feel the loss of warmth of the Spring, Marzhanna is transformed from a beautiful Goddess of Harvest to the skeletal Crone Witch of Winter. In this Western land where rain is a rare and sometimes fearful thing, where the chill of Earth Mother's tilt away from the might of the Summer sun won't be felt for two more lunar cycles, we are mindful of a slight cooling and lengthening night. We are not farmers, we have no crops to mow and thresh, no grain to store or mill, so of what is our Harvest? Let **us** be harvested from our past mistakes, our thoughtless words or deeds, our wasted time or resources and everything we wish we wouldn't have done, as grain is harvested from its withered stalk. Let us enjoy the bounty of our friends, of our

earthy faith, of our Mother Grove, and of Green Timbre Protogrove.

As we gather here in this congenial place imagining a weary Matka Ziema about to begin Her Winter rest, please stand now as we render honor and love to the Shining Ones, the Nature Spirits, and the Ancestors. *(waits for all to rise and says forcefully)*

Da **BUdyet SLAva boGAM!**

May the Gods be exalted!

ALL : May the Gods be exalted!