

Space, Position, Motions, Gestures ... and bowls:

A Solitary Ritual

Ceisiwr Serith

This ritual was written to be one that roughly followed the ADF Core Order of Ritual, that was both simple and intricate, and that was short enough to be performed regularly. Its primary functions are to put one in connection and accord with the Cosmos and the Kindreds, to be empowered by the Waters of Life, and to receive advice from the Kindreds by divination. It can be used to work on relationships with particular members or categories of the Kindreds, putting this after the invocations of the Kindreds, or for other workings (such as healings), putting them after the consumption of the Waters, either to replace the meditation or after it. Because it is stripped down to the basics, it is flexible enough to serve as the basis for just about anything.

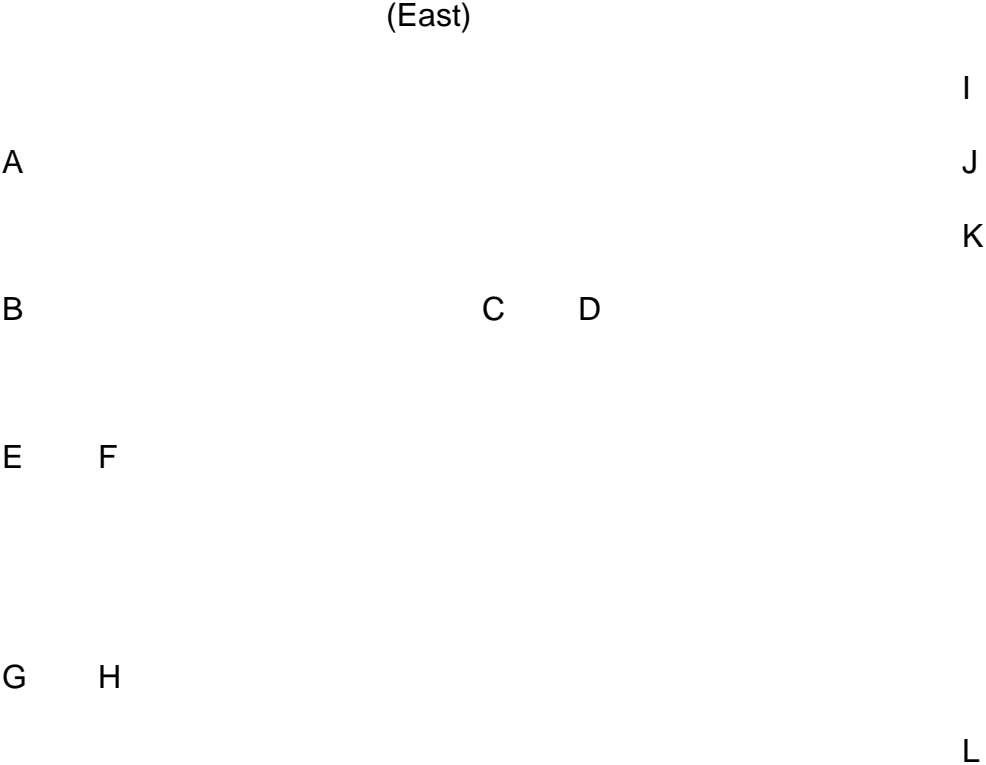
One of my main goals was to have much of the meaning carried by the motions and positions of the tools. This was accomplished by giving meaning to different areas of the ritual space, following several rules: Up is more sacred than down, right is more sacred than left, the center is more sacred than the outside, and east is more sacred than west. As you read through the ritual, keep these in mind.

Because of the importance of the actions for understanding the ritual, I've posted videos from it on youtube, the first of which is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoyfKryZuAg>; there are links to the others there.

The positions of the tools frequently have both: practical, aesthetic, and theological reasons. For instance, the bowl containing the offering to the spirits of the home is moved to the east of the lamp. This 1. gets it out of the way (practical), 2., provides a strong central axis of body, ritual zone, fire, home spirits (aesthetic), and 3. places it directly between you and the sacred east but within the liminal space, which is what a house is (theological). As you read through the ritual you might also want to keep *this* principle in mind, asking yourself what the reason for each position and action might be.

I've given the ritual without commentary. An extended version of this article, with commentary, may be found on my website, at www.ceisiwrserith.com/ritual/practice/adfrituals/druidsolitary.htm.

Table:



On the floor:

(to left of table)

(at center of table)

(on right of table)

M

N O

P (under overhang)

Q

A: Libation bowl

B: Waters bowl

C: Oil lamp or candle on a stand

D: Bowl of water (touching lamp stand)

E: Manannán bowl

F: Cernunnos bowl

G: House spirits bowl

H: Bell

I: Deities stone

J: Ancestors stone

K: Nature Spirits stone

L: Bowl or dish for ladle Pitcher of Waters

M: Ladle

N: Pitcher of Waters

O: Pitcher of milk

P: Matches

Q: Runes

The stand I used for the oil lamp was one for displaying merchandise that I picked up at an antique store that also sold items for dealers. The table is a cutting board on two low stools. Any low table can be used, provided it is a convenient height, both to kneel with, and balance with the height of the oil lamp and its stand, and is large enough to hold the equipment. It should be roughly square, or at least not far off from square.

The table top is organized into the left, mundane, space; the right, sacred, space; and a liminal zone between the two marked out by the width of the lamp stand. The portion of the liminal zone between the front edge of the board and the lamp is where most of the ritual acts will take place, and is therefore called the "ritual zone." The table is placed so that the ritualist is facing east, the Indo-European sacred direction.

The objects on the left, mundane, side of the table are arranged in order of use. Aesthetically, this helps the ritual flow more easily. Theologically, it means that the mundane side is organized in a mundane manner.

The objects on the right, sacred, side are arranged in a theologically significant manner. The stones for the deities, ancestors, and nature spirits are arranged vertically, the sacred direction, homologized to the cosmic pillar. They start from the surrounding world of the nature spirits, and end with the most divine gods and goddesses. They are in the eastern section of sacred side, close to the sacred center. The bowl of water is touching the stand of the oil lamp. This creates a connection between them which brings to mind the Indo-European mystery of fire-in-water, as well

as the belief that both are pure. The location of the ladle bowl is in the most mundane location within the sacred area in the west and towards the outside, because it is only there for the mundane reasons of disposing of the match and keeping the wet ladle from touching the table.

The pitchers of milk and the Waters are on the floor because they contain offerings which will enter the sacred from the mundane world. They are put next to each other in the order of use, with their handles facing inwards to make them easier to pick up. They are next to each other horizontally, the mundane orientation. The ladle is there with them because it will serve the mundane task of transferring the Waters. The matches are where they are for aesthetic reasons, so that they don't distract from the beauty of the table. The runes are on the sacred side because they are the way by which we receive messages from the sacred. They are on the floor for practical reasons, since they wouldn't fit well on the table. If you use a form of divination that would fit well and look good, your tools could certainly go on the table.

I chose the objects I did for both aesthetic and practical reasons. I like glass and silver ritual objects, and I had a fair number of glass bowls already. I used a ladle bowl shaped like a leaf because I happened to have one around, and it fit well with the size of the ladle, as well as being pretty. I needed to balance sizes, of course, which in the end required buying a larger cutting board than the one I usually use. If you want to do the ritual, you can use whatever objects you find attractive and that fit with each other.

Materially-speaking, the drink used for the Waters should have consciousness-changing qualities. Alcohol is the most Indo-European, but distilled liquor, unless diluted, shouldn't be used; too much is drunk during the ritual. Instead, use beer, wine,

or mead. If you want something non-alcoholic, cool tea works well. I suppose even an energy drink could be used.

Alternatively, a honey-water mix (about a tablespoon per cup) is nice. There is nothing specifically psychoactive about it (although there can be a bit of a sugar rush), but it can be seen as a pre-fermented mead.

!. Establishing Sacred Time and Space

Kneel in front of the table. Take a few slow breaths to calm yourself. Pick up the bell with your right hand and ring it three times. Transfer it to your left hand and put it on the floor to the left of the table, in front of the Waters pitcher.

Pick up the bowl of water. Purify yourself. You can use whatever form of purification you are used to. I do this:

May I be pure that I might cross through the sacred. (Anoint forehead.)

May I cross through the sacred that I might attain the holy. (Anoint lips.)

May I attain the holy that I might be blessed in all things. (Anoint left hand.)

Put the bowl down on the floor on your right.

Move the house spirits bowl into the ritual zone. Pick up the milk pitcher and pour the milk into the bowl:

I offer milk to the spirits of my home

in return for their protection and blessings.

Put the milk pitcher on floor on the right side of the table. Touch the bowl of milk to the lamp, then move it over the lamp and place it on the eastern side.

Light the oil lamp, putting the extinguished match in the ladle dish:

In the world's very center I light my fire,
here where the sacred and the mundane meet
Here I light a living flame,
through which my offerings will be transformed
that they might be received by the Kindreds
and secure for me their blessings.

Bring your hands to in front of you, touching and slightly cupped. Raise them in a semi-circle with both your hands, singing:

The waters support and surround me.

Puts your hands in the middle of the top of the semi-circle, palms downward, and bring them out to the ends of the semi-circle, singing:

The land extends about me.

Make another semi-circle upwards from the edge of the other one, with your hands meeting at its top, singing:

The sky stretches out above me.

Hold both your hands, palms down and touching, out towards the fire, and then bring them in to touch your heart, singing:

At the center burns a living flame.

Move your hands into the orans position, singing:

May all the Kindreds bless us.

May my worship be true.

May my actions be just.

May my love be pure.

Blessings, and honor, and worship to the Holy Ones.

Stretch your hands out to your side as horizontally as possible, sit up as straight as you can, and say:

I sit in the center of the Cosmos.

II. Invoking the Kindreds and Opening the Gate

Invoke Cernunnos:

Come to me, Cernunnos,
Inspirer of speech,
Come to me, Cernunnos,
Inspirer of prayer,
Come to me, come to me, Lord Cernunnos.

Come to me, Cernunnos,
God of the in-between,
Come to me, Cernunnos,
God of this and that,
Come to me, come to me, Lord Cernunnos.

Come to me, Cernunnos,
Who sits in the door,
Come to me, Cernunnos,
Who opens the gate,
Come to me, come to me, Lord Cernunnos,
Come to the one who worships you here.

With the first verse, pour some of the Waters into the Cernunnos bowl and then put pitcher down in front of you on the floor. With the second, touch it to the oil lamp. With the third, put it on right side of the ritual zone, touching the lamp stand.

Pause, and then say:

From tearing ocean into welcoming bay,
Come homeward, Sailor, on silver keel.
Cross beacon-guided the shattering shoal,
and gently come, and joyful stay.

From tearing ocean into welcoming bay,
past guardian jetty guide your boat,
and tie its rope to pillared pier,
and gently come, and joyful stay.

From tearing into welcoming bay,
set foot on land with blessing touch,
and enter home, and sit at hearth.
Come homeward, Sailor; come Son of Sea:
O gently come, o joyful stay.

With the first verse, pour some of the Waters into the Manannán bowl and then put pitcher down in front of you on the floor. With the second, touch it to oil lamp. With the third, put it on right side of the ritual zone, touching the lamp stand.

Hold a hand over each of these two bowls, crossing them, left over right, so that your right hand is over the left bowl and vice versa. Say:

Cernunnos, Manannán, open the way;

Manannán, Cernunnos, open the way:

Disperse the mists

Conjoin the disparate.

Through an opened gate

may my words flow;

Through an opened gate

may my blessings flow;

Through an opened gate,

may the words,

may the blessings,

of the Kindreds freely flow.

Open the way, Manannán and Cernunnos.

Open the way, Cernunnos and Manannán,

Open the way, open the way, open the way.

The gate is open!

During the next to last line, bring your hands out and up in a sign of opening, ending in the orans position.

Bring your hands inwards to touch chest.

I invite the Kindreds to join me here today.

Move the Waters bowl into the ritual zone, touching the Cernunnos and Manannán bowls.

Pick up the pitcher of the Waters and pour some into the Waters bowl:

Nature Spirits, with the pouring of this libation I invite you here.

Put the pitcher back down on the floor in front of you and pick up the Nature Spirits stone. Touch it to the lamp and then place it on the left of the front of the ritual zone :

Watching Ones, may your blessings be with me today.

Pick up the pitcher of the Waters and pour some into the Waters bowl:

Ancestors, with the pouring of this libation I invite you here.

Put the pitcher back down on the floor in front of you and pick up the Ancestor stone. Touch it to the lamp and then place it in the center of the front of the ritual zone:

Mighty Ones, may your power be with me today.

Pick up the pitcher of the Waters and pour the remainder into the Waters bowl:

Gods and Goddesses, with the pouring of this libation I invite you here.

Put the pitcher back down on the floor in front of you and pick up the deities stone. Touch it to the lamp and then place it on the right of the front of the ritual zone:

Shining Ones, may your wisdom be with me today.

Put the pitcher back down on the floor in front of you. Hold the Waters bowl over the flame:

Lovely Ones, with these libations, I invite you all to join me here today.

Move Waters bowl to the right of the table, touching the lamp stand.

Put hands in orans position:

Called to my presence with prayers and libations,

the Kindreds are here, with blessings and friendship.

Welcome to the Kindreds, to the Kindreds all,

with blessings, with honor, with worship.

III. Receiving the Gifts of the Kindreds.

Move the milk pitcher to the right of the table, in front of the milk pitcher. Pick up the runes, touch them to the oil lamp. Say:

Wisest Ones,

whose knowledge of the Xártus is true,

send me your teaching.

Divine, placing the rune(s) to interpret in the space between the Kindreds stones and the Gatekeepers bowls, and returning the rest of them to their place. After interpreting, move the interpreted rune(s) to the left side of the table, where the house spirits bowl had been:

I hear what the Kindreds have said

and am made wise by it

Hold the Waters bowl about three inches over the flame a moment:

Through the offerings I have made

I have established the bonds of hospitality with the Kindreds,
and in return they have given me this blazing water to drink,
this holy water,
this sacred water

Lift the bowl to eye level:

these Waters of Life.

Put the Waters bowl down between the Kindreds stones and the Gatekeepers bowls, not touching any of them. Bring the libation bowl into the ritual zone, to the right of the Waters bowl and touching it. Pick up the ladle in your right hand and dip it three times in the water in the purification bowl. Then ladle some of the Waters into the Waters bowl in three parts:

May the Kindreds always receive their due.

Put the ladle onto its dish. Hold the libation bowl over the flame a moment, and then move it to the right of the lamp, touching the lamp stand.

Lift the Waters bowl and say:

and may I receive inspiration.

May I receive power.

May I receive unending life.

Drink the Waters, once with each line, leaving about a third behind. Put the Waters bowl down in the same position it was in. Sit back:

I rest myself in the presence of the Kindreds.

Meditate a while. Then open arms:

With the Kindreds about me

With the power of their mystery within

I pray for the world and all in it.

May the blessings granted to me extend to them as well.

May they be happy and whole.

May they be loved and lively.

And may they dwell in peace,

wrapped in the arms of the Kindreds.

Gods and Goddesses,

Ancestors:

Nature Spirits,

I pray to you on their behalf.

During “May the blessings ...,” move the Waters bowl to immediately to the left of the lamp, but not touching the lamp stand. Touch the appropriate stone when each Kindred is named.

IV. Saying farewell to the Kindreds

Raise your hands into the orans position:

Blessed ones, may you always be with me.

I thank all the Kindreds for your many gifts.

Pick up the deity stone and touch it to the lamp:

Thank you, gods and goddesses,

for joining me here today.

May there ever be peace between us in this world we share.

Put the deities stone down in its original place.

Pick up the Ancestor stone and touch it to the lamp:

Thank you, Ancestors,

for joining me here today.

May there ever be peace between us in this world we share.

Put the Ancestors stone down in its original place.

Pick up the Nature Spirit stone and touch it to lamp:

Thank you, Nature Spirits,
for joining me here today.

May there ever be peace between us in this world we share.

Put the Nature Spirit stone down in its original place.

Spread your hands into the orans position:

Thanks to the Kindreds, to the Kindreds all,
with blessings, with honor, with worship.

Hold out your hands, one over the Cernunnos bowl and one over the Manannán
bowl, crossed as before:

Manannán, Cernunnos, you cleared the way
Cernunnos, Manannán, you opened the gate.
Close now the gate that I might end my rite.
May the Holy Ones be yet never far away
that they might come to me in my time of need.

With the line “May the Holy Ones ...” spread your hands into the orans position.

Pause, then bring your hands together:

Let the gate be closed.

Open your hands. Hold the right one over the Manannán bowl:

Manannán, I thank you for helping me today,
and ask that you continue to help me
by clearing the mists that divide me from the truth.

Hold the bowl over the flame a moment and then pour its contents into the libation bowl. Put the bowl down in front of and touching the libation bowl.

Hold your right hand over the Cernunnos bowl:

Cernunnos, I thank you for helping me today,
and ask that you continue to help me
by aiding me in seeing the patterns
and in communicating them to others.

Hold the bowl over the flame a moment and then pour its contents into the libation bowl. Put the bowl down to the right of and touching the Manannán and libation bowls.

V. Closing the Rite

Put your right hand behind the flame:

Extinguished without,

Blow the flame out. Bring your right hand to your chest:

but burning within,

the living fire flames within me.

Put your hands flat on your knees:

The rite is ended.

Ring the bell four times and put it in its original place on the table.

Drink the remainder of the Waters.

After the ritual, put the two libation bowls in your home shrine for at least a day and then dispose of them outside, saying, "To the spirits, the leavings."

At the end of ritual:

Table:

G

I

J

K

B

CA

EF

L

Drawn rune

On the floor:

(to left of table)

(at center of table)

(on right of table)

D H

P (under overhang)

O Q

N

A: Libation bowl (touching oil lamp)

- B: Waters bowl
- C: Oil lamp
- D: Bowl of water
- E: Manannán bowl
- F: Cernunnos bowl (A, E, and F touching)
- G: House spirits bowl
- H: Bell
- I: Deities stone
- J: Ancestors stone
- K: Nature Spirits stone
- L: Bowl or dish for ladle Pitcher of Waters (containing burnt match and ladle (M))
- N: Pitcher of Waters
- O: Pitcher of milk
- P: Matches
- Q: Runes

This ritual was somewhat inspired by Ian Corrigan's "Solitary Druid Liturgy," which can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvjfWmh--3M>. Other influences were the Japanese Tea Ceremony and the Zoroastrian yasna ritual (J.J. Modi: *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*. Bombay: British India Press, 1922, 260-329; <http://avesta.org/ritual/rcc4.htm>).