

A Genocide Prevention Ritual

April, 2009

by Brandon Newberg

Explanation: April has the unfortunate privilege of having no less than six anniversaries of genocide: Rwanda, Cambodia, Darfur, Armenia, Bosnia, and the Holocaust. So April has been declared [Genocide Prevention Month](#).

[The Genocide Prevention Ritual](#) is an interfaith event organized by [Polytheist Charity](#). It consists of numerous rituals held worldwide throughout the month of April. Individuals and groups hold their own local rituals to raise awareness and funds. Anyone, whether in groups or solitary, may participate. Several ADF rituals are slated for April 2009, including a ritual at the [Trillium](#) spring gathering in Virginia. Please consider holding your own solitary ritual in April, or ask your grove mates about a group event. See the [web site](#) for more details.

The ritual itself is simple, and can be incorporated into any liturgical or celebratory framework. What follows is one example following the ADF [COoR](#) liturgy. The three phases of the Genocide Prevention Ritual have been fit into the Workings section, with the rest of the liturgy focused around them. Many other styles and variations are possible. The deities invoked here are Greek, but any pantheon may be used. Of particular interest may be deities of earth, hearth, justice, war/peace, protection, women, and lost souls.

This ritual script takes both groups and solitaries into consideration. Where group activities take the foreground, suggestions for solitary activities are provided.

On the altar:

An arrangement of flowers, all of one kind. White may be an appropriate color.

1. Initiating the Rite (and 4. Statement of Purpose)

(Processional Chant)

Chant: [Come we now as a people - music and words by Ian Corrigan](#)

Come we now as a people

To gather at the sacred well.

Come we now as a people

Together in the warmth and the light of the flame.

(Musical Signal)

(3 sets of 3 claps)

(Opening Prayer)

O Gods and goddesses, Ancestors, and Nature Spirits, hear us now. This is a ritual to remember, awaken, and act. Many are the tragedies suffered in the past. Let us mourn together. Many are the atrocities perpetrated at this very moment all over the globe. Let us awaken together. And great is our commitment to prevent genocide at all costs. Let us vow together. This is the Genocide Prevention Ritual. O Kindreds, join us in this cause, if you will.

2. Purification

(Offering to the Outsiders)

To all who stand against this way,

Take this and make no trouble today! (or: against this rite, / no trouble tonight!)

Outsiders, this is for you. (offer)

At this time let us also set aside those parts of ourselves that may work against this rite. Let us set aside narrow, provincial views. In their place let us take up a global outlook. We are many peoples on this earth, all unique and different. But we are all one in humanity, all one with the Mother.

Chant: [We are one with the Mother - "traditional ADF"](#)

We are one with the Mother,

We are one with the earth,

We are one with each other,

By our lives, by our birth.

3. Honoring the Earth Mother

The Sky is one Sky over us all, the Earth one Earth under our feet. The blood that runs into the ground seeps everywhere, and no one goes unstained. O Earth Mother, you who have seen suffering, far too much suffering among your children, we honor you now.

Chant: [Earth Mother Chant - Author Unknown](#)

Earth Mother, we honor your body

Earth Mother, we honor your bones

Earth Mother, we sing to your spirit

Earth Mother, we sing to your stones

4. Statement of Purpose – (accomplished in opening prayer)

5. (Re)Creating the Cosmos

Roots reaching down

To the Waters of Earth below,

Water flowing up to the Sacred Center;

Branches reaching up

To the Fires of Heaven above,

Fire flowing down to the Sacred Center.

May this Grove be well-established

In the world beheld in three:

The Land beneath, the Sky above,

And all around the Sea.

Behold the Sacred Center!

And here at this Sacred Center burns a fire, a fire like all fires that keep mankind warm, a fire like all fires that burn in the home. In many traditions the hearth fire was lit from a central sacred fire, so that in a sense all fires in the community were one. Let us now

connect to this sacred fire at the center of the world community. We are all gathered in this great household called Earth, all related through this sacred hearth.

Chant: [Portal Song - words and music by Ian Corrigan ©Stonecreed Grove, ADF](#)

CHORUS

By Fire and by Water, between the Earth and Sky

We stand like the World-Tree rooted deep, crowned high.

Come we now to the Well, the eye and the mouth of Earth,

Come we now to the Well, and silver we bring,

Come we now to the Well, the waters of rebirth,

Come we now to the Well, together we sing:

CHORUS

We will kindle a Fire, Bless all, and with harm to none,

We will kindle a Fire, and offering pour,

We will kindle a Fire, A light 'neath the Moon & Sun,

We will kindle a fire, our spirits will soar.

CHORUS

Gather we at the Tree, the root & the crown of all,

Gather we at the Tree, Below & above,

Gather we at the Tree, Together we make our call,

Gather we at the Tree, In wisdom & love.

CHORUS

Say:

Sacred Fire, carry this rite to the worlds above!

Sacred Well, carry this rite to the world below!

Sacred Tree, bear witness to this rite in all the worlds!

6. Opening the Gate(s)

(Inviting the Gatekeeper - various deities may keep the Gates; what follows invokes Hekate)

O Hekate of the Three Ways,

O Hekate of the Crossroads,

Once you heard the cries of Persephone as she was taken away,

And you with your bright torches aided her mother in the search for the lost child.

Hekate, guide us now, as the voices of so many lost children cry out for aid.

O Hekate,

With this prayer,

We ask but that you remember us,

For now we need your help.

Be with us in this Grove.

Offerings be to Hekate.

Hail, Hekate! Hail! (offer)

(Opening the Gates)

Gatekeeper Hekate,

May you join your might with ours,

In the work of opening the Gates.

Let the Gate of the Fire be opened!

Let the Gate of the Well be opened!

Let the Gate of the Tree be opened!

And as they open,

Let our eyes and ears and hearts be opened evermore!

Gatekeeper Hekate,

May you guard these Gates for us,

As we give honor to the Kindreds.

7. Inviting the Three Kindreds

O Ancestors, you remember the tragedies of your days, even as you look upon ours today. Help us end the repetition of history.

Offerings be to the Ancestors.

Hail, Ancestors! Hail! (offer)

O Nature Spirits, you surround the conflicts of mankind, and your habitats are destroyed by our infighting. Help us end the proliferation of violence.

Offerings be to the Nature Spirits.

Hail, Nature Spirits! Hail! (offer)

O Gods and Goddesses, you live with us and give us power, but only we can act. Help us end the reign of indifference.

Offerings be to the Gods and Goddesses.

Hail, Gods and Goddesses! Hail! (offer)

8. Key Offerings

(Inviting the Beings of the Occasion - various beings may be called; what follows invokes Zeus and Hera)

O Mighty lord of strangers,

O Mighty lord of supplicants,

O Great god of hospitality,

O Great god of justice,

Zeus, Lord of Olympos,

Be with us now.

And you,

O Mighty lady of marriage,

O Mighty lady of widows,

O Great goddess of women,

O Great goddess of justice,

Hera, Queen of Heaven,

Be with us now.

We call upon you two, who look upon the whole earth from your heavenly home, to bear witness to the atrocities of this world. It happened in Auschwitz, and we said "Never again." It happened in Rwanda, and we said "Never again." But it is happening again, and again, and again. This world you love is in danger. All over there are voices crying out for justice. Today we add our voices to this poor choir.

Zeus, lord of strangers, protect those who are considered "other." To them let us give not indifference but the oak branch of honor, as was given to strangers at the Panathenaia of Athens to mark them as honored guests.

Zeus, lord of suppliants, have mercy on those who cry out for help. To them let us give not indifference but aid.

Zeus, god of hospitality, provide shelter to refugees and displaced persons. To them let us give not indifference but food, water, shelter, and medicine.

Zeus, god of justice, make accountable those who commit these misdeeds. To them let us give not indifference but prosecution to the full extent of international law.

Hera, lady of marriage, protect those whose families are in danger, for genocide is also the destroying of families in order to undo an entire people. To them let us give not indifference but sympathy and support.

Hera, lady of widows, comfort those who lose their spouses to murder and violence. To them let us give not indifference but compassion and aid.

Hera, goddess of women, save those in danger of violation, for rape is a weapon of war, and many live in terror and shame. To them let us give not indifference but prevention and healing.

Hera, goddess of justice, make accountable those who commit these misdeeds. To them let us give not indifference but prosecution to the full extent of international law.

(present key offerings)

9. Prayer of Sacrifice

O Kindreds, these are our sacrifices. Accept these gifts, and in return aid us in this cause to prevent genocide.

Chant: [Offering Song - words by Anthony R. Thompson, music by Ian Corrigan](#)

Let our voices arise on the Fire,
Let our voices resound in the Deep,
May the spirits accept what we offer,
As we honor the old ways we keep.

By Land, Sky, and Sea,
By Fire, Well, and Tree,
And by the Kindreds Three:
Accept our Sacrifice,
And give us a sign of your will!

10. Omen

(take omen)

11. Calling (asking) for the Blessings.

We've given our gifts, O Kindreds,

Now let your blessings flow.

Hear our prayers and give to all who suffer:

Health, Wealth, and Wisdom!

Grant us also these blessings we ask in our hearts.

(take a moment for silent prayer)

12. Hallowing the Blessing

Chant: [Power of the Spirits - words and music by Ian Corrigan, ©StoneCreed Grove 1998](#)

Power of the Spirits... Flowing through me...

Power of the Spirits... Shining in me...

Power of the Spirits... Growing with me...

O Kindreds,

Your blessings are upon us!

Let them come into these waters,

That we may drink them down,

On behalf of all who suffer.

Behold the Waters of Life! (drink)

13. Affirmation of the Blessing

Hail, Kindreds, strong in me!

Thanks be to the Kindreds Three!

These blessings empower us to action, even as they flow out to aid all who live in fear and danger in the world today.

14. Workings

(the following makes use of multiple chants, appropriate for groups; some solitaries may wish to meditate on these themes instead)

Now as the Kindreds surround us and their power flows within us, let us focus these energies to our common will to prevent genocide.

We do this work at a significant time, for April has the unfortunate privilege of hosting no less than six anniversaries or commemorations of genocide. This is Genocide Prevention Month, and events all over the world are being held as we speak. The focusing of wills is truly worldwide. We are a world community, standing up to say we will not let this happen again. Let us tap into this worldwide stream of intention, flowing all around us. And let us add our own strength to the current.

(Phase 1 - A Time to Remember)

(this phase can focus on one or two genocides, or a list of them; for inspiration, see the wikipedia article [Genocides in History](#))

Many are the tragedies of the past, and those lost to them. Let us remember them now. For each event, let us chant one round of "Well of Memory." As we come to each event, recall what happened and those who suffered. Feel free to call out the names of any you wish to remember, whether you knew them personally or simply know their story.

(chant once for each of 3 to 6 historical events selected with sensitivity to the participants gathered; for a faster option, chant once while a person calls out a list of historical genocides; take care that the section does not grow too long)

Chant: [Well of Memory - words and music by Diane Emerald Vaughn](#)

Look into the Well of Memory.

Look into the Well of Time.

Look into the Well of Ages.

I am yours, you are mine.

Listen to the ancient stories.

Listen to the ancient songs.

Listen to the ancient wisdom.

I go on - you go on.

Deep within our hearts are beating.

Deep within our hearts we know.

Our descendants will remember.

Our love flows, your love flows.

(Phase 2 - A Time to Awaken)

(this phase may focus on one or two areas of concern, or highlight a list of them; for inspiration see [GI-NET's eight areas of concern](#))

The horrors of the past flow into the present. Today all over the world there are those in grave danger. Atrocities and crimes against humanity are being committed. In many places men are being murdered, women raped, and children forced into military service. It is not easy for us to know exactly what is happening, as information is often controlled by oppressive powers. Nor is it easy for us to know exactly what constitutes genocide, for we must understand each unique situation in depth to make that decision. But we will not let this stop us. We will not turn away our heads because it is difficult or controversial. In the world today there are many "areas of concern." Let us bring our attention to them now. For each area of concern, let us chant one round of "Blessed with the Waters of Life," focusing on our common humanity.

(chant once for each area of concern, or chant once while a person calls out areas of concern; again, take care that the section does not grow too long)

Chant: [We Are Blessed with the Waters of Life - words and music by Alex DelBusso](#)

We are blessed with the waters of life

And the air that we breathe

Will bring us freedom

And the fire that we kindle tonight

On this sacred earth

Will bring us together

Spirits together

(Phase 3 - A Time to Act)

Our history is full of terrible things, but we are not bound to repeat them. Let us break the cycle. Let us end the reign of indifference.

(hold up or gesture to the arrangement of flowers)

These flowers are the victims of genocide.

These flowers are the victims of atrocities.

These flowers are our brothers and sisters in humanity.

These flowers have suffered rape, torture, starvation, and murder.

And even as they are cut down, let us affirm that we shall never allow this to happen again. Let us intone together now, to express our commitment.

(participants intone, while a person ceremonially removes the blossoms of the flowers, leaving the naked stems to stand; solitaires may cut the blossoms first and then intone)

A moment of silence.

(pause for a moment of silence)

(the following is written for groups; solitaires may adapt it by simply making the vow themselves)

Now let us affirm a vow:

Never again shall we stand idly by while atrocities stain our earth.

Never again shall we look on the sufferings in the world community as "distant" or "not our problem."

And although there is no fast or easy solution, never again shall we rest while there remains something we can do to prevent genocide.

These blossoms fall, but we vow "never again."

If you affirm this vow, then join your voices now with the words "never again."

(participants shout: NEVER AGAIN!)

So be it.

15. Thanking the Beings

(Thanking and Bidding Farewell)

O Zeus, Lord of Olympos,

O Hera, Queen of Heaven,

Witness our commitment,

And give us the strength to act

As we go now from this ritual.

With this prayer,

We ask but that you remember us,

When next we need your help.

Thank you for being with us in this Grove.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to Zeus and Hera.

(Thanking the Three Kindreds)

As we go now from this ritual, empowered to act,

Let us give thanks to the Ancestors.

Thanks be to the Ancestors!

Let us give thanks to the Nature Spirits.

Thanks be to the Nature Spirits!

Let us give thanks to the Gods and Goddesses.

Thanks be to the Gods and Goddesses!

16. Closing the Gate(s)

(Closing the Gates of the Sacred Center)

Gatekeeper Hekate,

You have guarded these Gates for us,

But now the rite is over.

May you join your might with ours,

In the work of closing the Gates.

Gatekeeper Hekate,

Let the Gate of the Fire be closed.

Let the Gate of the Well be closed.

Let the Gate of the Tree be closed.

And as they close,

Let our eyes and ears and hearts be opened evermore.

(Thanking and Bidding Farewell to the Gatekeeper)

O Hekate of the Three Ways,

O Hekate of the Crossroads,

Lead us with your bright torches

To those crying out for help.

With this prayer,

We ask but that you remember us

When next we need your help.

Stay if you will, go if you must.

Thanks be to Hekate.

(Renewing the Grove in Ground and Center)

Roots reaching down

To the Waters of Earth below,

Water flowing up to the Sacred Center;

Branches reaching up

To the Fires of Heaven above,

Fire flowing down to the Sacred Center.

May this Grove go well-established

In the world beheld in three:

The Land beneath, the Sky above,

And all around the Sea.

Go in the peace of the Sacred Center!

17. Thanking the Earth Mother

(Honoring the Earth Mother and Formal Ending of the Rite)

O Earth Mother,

One day we shall we return unto you.

Even so today does this portion of your bounty.

And as we give this final offering,

Let us never forget

The one sky above us all,

The one earth beneath our feet,

And our common humanity.

We are all one with the Mother.

Offerings be to the Earth Mother.

Hail, Earth Mother! Hail! (offer all remaining offerings)

18. Closing the Rite

The rite is ended.

Go in peace.

Thanks be to all.

(Recessional)

Chant: [Walk with Wisdom - words and music by Sable](#)

Walk with wisdom from this hallowed place.

Walk not in sorrow, our roots shall ere embrace.

May strength be your brother, and honor be your friend,

And luck be your lover until we meet again.