

Introduction

Hellenic ritual consists of nine parts or steps, whether practicing solitary or with a group. These nine parts are:

- Procession
- Purification of the People
- Purification of the Space
- Lighting the Hearth Fire
- Initial Libation
- Presentation & Activities
- Feast
- Closing Libation

In Hellenic ritual, the only criterion needed to lead a ritual of fulfill any of the roles of the ritual is respect for the Theoi (Gods).

Hellenic ritual is based on orthopraxy (practice) rather than orthodoxy. What is done and said is more important than what is believed.

More Information

The Hellenion calendar:
www.hellenion.org/calendar

Sample rituals and other information:
www.hellenion.org/worship

Modern hymns:
www.hellenion.org/hymnodia

Feast - εἰλαπίνη (eilarínē)

The feast occurs either after the initial libation or after the presentation or activities if there are any. Food is prepared during the activities and then each person is served a portion with a small amount extra to place in the fire for the Theoi.

In smaller rituals, the feast can be a simple placing of grains of barley onto the fire. Food placed on coals or fire to burn should burn completely so it can be best to restrict it to a few grains of barely indoors.

Closing libation- τελευταία σπονδή (televtaía spondē)

The closing libation is exactly like the opening libation but in reverse order, the Olympians first, the deity of the ritual next, and then Hestia. It is appropriate to thank the Theoi for attending and to ask for blessings going forward as you leave the sacred space. After the final libation to Hestia, it is good to close the ritual/festival with a closing phrase, such as, "Be brave for all good things have come to pass," or, "Then may blessings go with you, and may the Gods watch benevolently over you and guard you with favorable fortunes!" Then drain your drinking cup.

Following the Ritual or Festival

In ancient Greece there were people assigned to clean up after a festival. Today, participants should remain after the final drink to make sure the site used is left either as it was or in better condition. This is extremely important to do when using any public or private site.

www.Hellenion.org

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Ελληνιον Hellenic Ritual

*"I sing to Thee, Mighty Gods.
You who dwell in Olympus,
apart from man
yet always a part of our lives."*

- Hymn To All The Gods
by D. Romano



Procession--Πομπή (pompe)

In ancient Greece, the procession started either at the Hestia (community hearth) or the city gates. In modern times, a procession could start at the entrance to a park, the front door, or be a few steps from the kitchen to the ritual space.

The purpose of the procession is to designate the physical movement from the profane to the sacred, which serves to encourage the mind and spirit to mark the transition as well. As long as the purpose of the procession is kept, it can be long or short.

Although the procession is serious, it need not be somber. A procession honoring Dionysos, for instance, might be accompanied by music and dancing. Lit candles or torches are a welcome addition to any night procession.

Purification of the People Καθαρισμός τῶν λαῶν (katharismós ton laōn)

In Greek ritual, purification of the people is used to further separate the profane from the sacred. The persons officiating the ritual may fast before leading the ritual. All participants must purify themselves; appearing before the Theoi in a polluted state is not acceptable.

In Hellenic ritual, κέρνιψ (khérnips) is used for this purification. Sometimes called lustral water, khérnips is water which has either had sea salt added to it or has had the burning brand of an herb placed in the water. The participants will either wash their hands in the water or have the water poured over their hands by the person officiating. While the purification is being done, the participants may want to say; "O Gods turn away evils" (ὦ θεοί,

γίνοισθε ἀπότροφοι κακῶν - ο theoi, apotrofoi kakōn) or "Far off, far off, be the profane" (ἐκάς, ἐκάς ἔστε βέβηλοι - hekás, hekás éste bébēloi!).

Purification of the Sacred Space Καθαρισμός τοῦ τεμένου (katharismós tou teménou)

Any area may be purified for Hellenic ritual, from a park or open field to a back yard or a small corner of a room. The only real requirement is that the area be made sacred.

This can be done in two ways: one is by sprinkling nator (a mixture of salt soda), around the area, or by asperging the area with khernips. If khernips is used, it must be removed from the sacred area once used, as it is then ritually impure.

Lighting the Hearth Fire Καυσάμενον πῦρ τῆς ἑστίας (kavsan pir tis hestias/estias)

If the ritual is being held outdoors, the Hearth fire can be a true fire in a fire pit or any container meant for such. Indoors, if not in a fireplace, it is best to confine the fire to either incense and a candle or smokeless indoor charcoal. Always be safe and cautious when using an open flame.

Whichever method is being used, when the fire is being lit, the one lighting it can say, "I/we light this sacred flame whose Father is Hephaistos and whose Mother is Hestia."

Initial Libation

Πρώτη Σπονδή (prōtē spondē)

Libations (σπονδές, spondes) are drink offerings shared with the Immortals. Historically these were wine mixed with water or milk and honey mixed. Today a libation can be a traditional wine and water mixture, honey and milk, unmixed wine, fruit juice or any beverage chosen. In some

groups, the beverage of choice can be something everyone agrees on. However, consideration must be given to dietary restrictions in the modern world, and oftentimes, it is best if everyone brings their own drink to share.

If everyone is drinking the same wine or wine and water mixture, then a person or persons who have been chosen to do so will serve all participants an equal amount of the beverage. If each participant is drinking something different, they can fill their own drinking bowl or goblet.

The libations have their own ritual; each libation is addressed to the Theoi directly by name and which epithet(s) fits the occasion. Also, every libation ritual should start with a libation to Hestia. For instance, a ritual for Apollon would begin with, "Spondē! Hestia, who is always first and last." Pour a small amount of the libation into the bowl and then take a sip; then "Spondē! Apollon, far darter, Healer, player on the lyre and leader of the Muses, I/We call upon you by which ever name you prefer," then a libation is poured for the God, and the participant drinks. There may be a libation to the Olympians as a whole, nature spirits, or others as the ritual requires.

Outdoor libations can be poured onto the ground directly. Those taking place indoors should be poured into a bowl or other container to be poured into the ground later.

Presentation & Activities

Almost all Hellenic festivals include theatrical performances, games, contests, recitations, dancing, music, or other group activities. These vary for each festival, but the primary purpose is to build a sense of community. At the very least, there should be a statement of what the festival is trying to accomplish and the story behind it. Presentations and activities need not be a part of smaller rituals, like home libations or prayers.