

The Immortals

Hellenic Polytheists honor the Olympic deities. The Olympians (frequently referred to as the Immortals or the Deathless Ones) are six gods and six goddesses. Usually they are:

- Aphrodite
- Apollo
- Ares
- Artemis
- Athena
- Demeter
- Hephaistos
- Hera
- Hermes
- Hestia
- Poseidon
- Zeus

At least once a year, we try to honor each of the Olympians.

Often as individuals or in groups (demos), we give special attention to one or two “patron” deities and to the deity that protects our communities. Other deities are also venerated, such as the Chthonic (under/beneath the Earth) deities; we may honor them in times of need. (Example: Hecate when we are being initiated or to guide a loved one’s spirit at their death.) For very personal needs and protections, we sometimes honor the spirits of our ancestors, folk heroes, and lesser deities (daemons). For advice or knowledge, we sometimes pray to minor deities such as the Muses.

www.Hellenion.org

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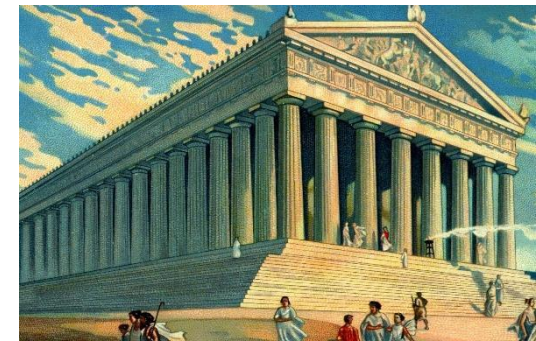
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Ελληνιον Hellenic Polytheism

“First, whenever you come to your house, offer good sacrifices to the eternal gods.”

Hesiod



Daily Life

The most basic guiding principles of Hellenic Polytheism are “Nothing to Excess” and “Know Yourself.” The first means finding the moderate path between behavioral extremes. The later means studying philosophy and ethics, learning from our mistakes, developing a realistic understanding of our abilities and weaknesses, and recognizing that we are mortals and not gods. We are committed to ethical behavior in our interactions with our communities.

Ritual Worship

Daily practice is through home rituals. Our household altars are the place where we honor the Immortals. Most worship of the gods is conducted at home. The home is considered the fortress of the household and travel outside of it can be dangerous. The household gods receive special honors on the first two days of each lunar month, Noumenia and Agathos Daimon.

Festivals and Hellenion’s monthly libations are public rituals in the home or a public location. They include meals and libations (spondes, drink offerings) that are shared among the ritual participants and the Immortals. Prior to any ritual we perform a ritual cleansing (katharmos), which may be as simple as washing hands in saltwater.

Ritual Structure

Rituals follow a basic structure: purification, offerings, libations, and hymns. When conducted outside, rituals begin with a procession (pompē) from a gathering place to the location where the ritual is to be performed. At home, rituals begin at the altar.

At the entrance to the ritual area, or prior to the home ritual, wash hands in salt water to purify. Asperge (sprinkle) the circle with

more salted water. Begin libations with a libation to Hestia.

The libation includes pouring a little on the ground or into a receiving vessel and the remainder may then be shared with the community (wine is the usual liquid libated and it may be mixed with water). Libations to one or more honored Olympians follow, along with hymns and offerings, followed by a libation to the Olympians as a group.

After this, include activities such as athletics, theatre, singing or musical performances.

When all is complete, follow with a final libation to Hestia and a closing benediction. Then the feast may begin. Set aside a portion of all foods and offerings for the gods (for meat sacrifices, this is traditionally the bones, skin and fat, if available) and either burn this portion or, if the location does not allow for burning, deposit it outside where it will not be disturbed. If this, too, is not available, dispose of it in any way with respect.

Calendar and Festivals

The Hellenic festival calendar is a lunar calendar, usually with at least one festival each lunar month. In ancient times, different cities had their own schedule of festivals that they observed. Hellenion officially follows the Attic calendar, as it is the one we know the most about. However, as in ancient times, each Demos may create their own festival calendar. Some common Attic festivals are:

- Panathenaia is a celebration of Athena’s birthday and a celebration of the community.
- Eleusinion is a celebration of Demeter, goddess of agriculture, and Asclepius, god of health.
- Apatouria is a celebration of family and clan (both natural and adopted).

- Chalkeiais a celebration of Athena, Hephaestus, arts and handicrafts.
- Dionysia is a celebration of Dionysus and the performing arts.
- Thargelia festival of Artemis & Apollo; purification of the evils of last year and planning for the next year.

For more information and the official Hellenion Calendar go to:
<http://www.hellenion.org/calendar/>

Clergy and Ritual Roles

Just as in Hellenic times, we believe that any person can offer sacrifices and prayers to the Immortals and can lead religious rituals. However, any worship group (Demos) may choose a designated ritual leader. The members of the Demos meet regularly to worship and study religious subjects. Many Demoi (plural of Demos) and Proto-Demoi have already been created and more are forming all the time.

Some members of the Demos may be responsible for storing and taking care of the religious items of the Demos and may also be the leaders of Demos. The decision about who will take on these roles is made within the Demos.

A Theoros is the clergy person recognized by Hellenion to represent the national organization in religious and legal matters. These people have studied extensively and been examined by Hellenion. They have proven their knowledge of the rituals and religion of Hellenic Polytheism but are based in their local Demos.

For our rituals and festivals, the congregation takes an active role, such as serving as libation bearers, carriers of sacred water, co-officiants, treasurer, torch bearers and sacred heralds, fire marshals or other roles that are needed.