



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Opening Ritual) February 17, daytime

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetic Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

Herakles, son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmene was a bane in Hera's life, simply for being born. He was stricken mad by the Queen of the Gods and killed his five sons by his wife Megara in a blind rage of Thebes. When he was released from his madness by a hellebore potion, he realized what he had done, cried out in anguish, and went on a long journey to cleanse himself of the miasma caused by these killings.

First, he visited the oracle at Delphi, who, unbeknownst to him, was whispered to by Hera. The Oracle told Herakles to serve the king of Tiryns, Eurystheus, for ten years and do everything Eurystheus told him to do. Eurystheus gladly provided Herakles with these labours--ten of them, one for each year--and eventually ended up adding two more, resulting in the Twelve Labours of Herakles. Herakles was told to: slay the Nemean Lion, slay the nine-headed Lernaean Hydra, capture the Golden Hind of Artemis, capture the Erymanthian Boar, clean the Augean stables in a single day, slay the Stymphalian Birds, capture the Cretan Bull, steal the Mares of Diomedes, obtain the girdle of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, obtain the cattle of the monster Geryon, steal the apples of the Hesperides, and to capture and bring back Kerberos, the Hound of the Underworld.

*This twelfth labour caused a problem for Herakles, because he had to enter the Underworld to capture Kerberos and come back up, something that the Underworld was not intended for. **All** who enters the Underworld drink of the water of the river Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. If*

Herakles drank, he would have forgotten his quest. So he needed to find a way around having to drink from Lethe, and that way was initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries. Those souls who came to the Underworld after being initiated could drink from the fountain (or well) of Mnemosyne and were allowed to remember.

Herakles knew what he had to do, but there was an issue: initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries excluded those who were guilty of murder, and of course Herakles was quite guilty of that. He was tainted with the miasma of killing his family. So Herakles travelled to Eleusis in search of a way into the Mysteries.

He spoke to the officials and convinced them of his plight. He would be allowed to participate in the Mysteries, but in order for Herakles to take part, he would have to be cleansed of the blood of his crimes first. As such, he was put through a purification rite at a shrine at the Ilissos river where he was cleansed and eventually, he was initiated into the Mysteries. Afterwards, he travelled to the Underworld and was able to complete his quest.

*After Herakles, many others would come to the Ilissos river to take part in the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries, as these rites became mandatory. These were the *mystai*, the initiates, and today, we remember their journey.*

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, you who taught us to work the earth and provides for us so bountifully...**

“I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful Goddess, of her and of her daughter lovely Kore. Hail, Goddess! Watch over us as we walk your most sacred road.”

From Homeric Hymn 13 to Demeter

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 40 To Eleusinian Demeter**

To Eleusinian Demeter

Deo, divine mother of all, goddess of many names,
revered Demeter, nurturer of youths, giver of prosperity and wealth,
you nourish the ears of corn, O giver of all,
you delight in peace and in toilsome labor.
Present at sowing, heaping, and threshing, O spirit of the unripe fruit,
you dwell in the sacred valley of Eleusis.
Charming and lovely, you give sustenance to all mortals;
you were the first to yoke the plowing ox,
the first to send up from below a rich, a lovely harvest for mortals.
You are growth and blossoming, O illustrious companion of Bromios,
torch-bearing and pure, you delight in the summer's yield.
From beneath the earth you appear, gentle to all,
O holy and youth-nurturing lover of children and of fair offspring.
You yolk your chariot to bridled dragons,
round your throne you whirl and howl in ecstasy.
You are an only daughter, but you have many children and many powers over mortals;
the variety of flowers reflect your myriad faces and your sacred blossoms.

Come, O blessed and pure one, come with the fruits of summer,
bearing peace, bring the welcome rule of law;
bring riches, too, and prosperity, and bring health that governs all.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kore: Khaire Kore, maiden Goddess of spring's bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water to Kore**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 29 Hymn To Persephone**

Hymn to Persephone

Persephone, blessed daughter of great Zeus, sole offspring
of Demeter, come and accept this gracious sacrifice.
Much honored spouse of Plouton, discreet and life-giving,
you command the gates of Hades in the bowels of the earth,
lovely-tressed Praxidike, pure bloom of Deo,
mother of the Erinyes, queen of the nether world,
secretly sired by Zeus in clandestine union.
Mother of loud-roaring, many-shaped Eobouleus,
radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons,
revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals,
in spring you take your joy in the meadow of breezes,
you show your holy figure in branches teeming with grass-green fruits,
in autumn you were made a kidnapper's bride.
You alone are life and death to toiling mortals,
O Persephone, you nourish all, always, and kill them, too.
Hearken, O blessed Goddess, send forth the fruits of the earth
as you blossom in peace, and in gentle-handed health
bring a blessed life and a splendid old age to him who is sailing
to your realm, O queen, and to mighty Plouton's kingdom.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Imagine to walk the path of Herakles, overcome with miasmic acts from the past. For Herakles, it was murder, for you things less dire but equally tainting. Small transgressions, things that occupy the mind. You, like Herakles, come to the river Ilissos for purification. Visualize yourself walking the dusty road from the gates of Athens to the shrine at the river Ilissos. The sunlight is sharp, the air crisp. Walking this path with you are all who are participating in these rites and all who have taken part in the Mysteries over the years. Feel the connection to ancient Hellas, the excitement, the sliver of fear of the unknown. These are the rites that will prepare you for the Eleusinian Mysteries and they will ensure your memories in the afterlife.**

“Blessed Demeter and golden haired Kore. Today we walk the path of the ancients. We walk the path of the hero Herakles. These days are devoted to You and You alone. Be with us, cleanse us, and when we come to You again, give us a glimpse of the Mysteries You have taught others oh so many years. This we pray of You, Goddesses of abundance who watches kindly over the human race.”

- ◆ **Present both Demeter and Kore, and any Gods and Goddesses you feel close to, who you want to invite to support you on this journey, with a personal offering that will be left on your altar for the duration of the Mysteries. You may offer anything you want, perishable or not. Take a moment to commit to this journey that the Mysteries are. Remember that it's going to mean a daily investment, sacrifices to Demeter and Kore, and will require not only an open mind but an open heart.**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Gods and Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

- ◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Study Day: Demeter) February 18, daytime

Today we study the mythology of Demeter, She who taught us to farm and sustain ourselves and who brings us plentiful harvest. We learn of Her mythology and how it came to be that Kore descended into the Underworld. Then we sacrifice to Them out of gratitude and understanding.

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter was composed in approximately the seventh century BC and served for centuries thereafter as the canonical hymn of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The text below was translated from the Greek by Hugh G. Evelyn-White and first published by the Loeb Classical Library in 1914. This text has been scanned and proof-read by Edward A. Beach, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

To Demeter

I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess —of her and her trim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus rapt away, given to him by all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer.

Apart from Demeter, lady of the golden sword and glorious fruits, she was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters of Oceanus and gathering flowers over a soft meadow, roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths and the narcissus, which Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to please the Host of Many, to be a snare for the bloom-like girl — a marvelous, radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred blooms and it smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above and the whole earth and the sea's salt swell laughed for joy. And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take the lovely toy; but the wide-pathed earth yawned there in the plain of Nysa, and the lord, Host of Many, with his immortal horses sprang out upon her —the Son of Cronos, He who has many names.¹

He caught her up reluctant on his golden car and bare her away lamenting. Then she cried out shrilly with her voice, calling upon her father, the Son of Cronos, who is most high and excellent. But no one, either of the deathless gods or of mortal men, heard her voice, nor yet the olive-trees bearing rich fruit: only tender-hearted Hecate, bright-coiffed, the daughter of Persaeus, heard the girl from her cave, and the lord Helios, Hyperion's bright son, as she cried to her father, the Son of Cronos. But he was sitting aloof, apart from the gods, in his temple where many pray, and receiving sweet offerings from mortal men. So he, that son of Cronos, of many names, who is Ruler of Many and Host of Many, was bearing her away by leave of Zeus on his immortal chariot —his own brother's child and all unwilling.

And so long as she, the goddess, yet beheld earth and starry heaven and the strong-flowing sea where fishes shoal, and the rays of the sun, and still hoped to see her dear

mother and the tribes of the eternal gods, so long hope calmed her great heart for all her trouble ... and the heights of the mountains and the depths of the sea rang with her immortal voice: and her queenly mother heard her.

Bitter pain seized her heart, and she rent the covering upon her divine hair with her dear hands: her dark cloak she cast down from both her shoulders and sped, like a wild-bird, over the firm land and yielding sea, seeking her child. But no one would tell her the truth, neither god nor mortal man; and of the birds of omen none came with true news for her. Then for nine days queenly Deo wandered over the earth with flaming torches in her hands, so grieved that she never tasted ambrosia and the sweet draught of nectar, nor sprinkled her body with water. But when the tenth enlightening dawn had come, Hecate, with a torch in her hands, met her, and spoke to her and told her news:

“Queenly Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of good gifts, what god of heaven or what mortal man has rapt away Persephone and pierced with sorrow your dear heart? For I heard her voice, yet saw not with my eyes who it was. But I tell you truly and shortly all I know.”

So, then, said Hecate. And the daughter of rich-haired Rhea answered her not, but sped swiftly with her, holding flaming torches in her hands. So they came to Helios, who is watchman of both gods and men, and stood in front of his horses: and the bright goddess enquired of him: “Helios, do you at least regard me, goddess as I am, if ever by word or deed of mine I have cheered your heart and spirit. Through the fruitless air I heard the thrilling cry of my daughter whom I bare, sweet scion of my body and lovely in form, as of one seized violently; though with my eyes I saw nothing. But you—for with your beams you look down from the bright upper air over all the earth and sea—tell me truly of my dear child, if you have seen her anywhere, what god or mortal man has violently seized her against her will and mine, and so made off.”

So said she. And the Son of Hyperion answered her: “Queen Demeter, daughter of rich-haired Rhea, I will tell you the truth; for I greatly reverence and pity you in your grief for your trim-ankled daughter. None other of the deathless gods is to blame, but only cloud-gathering Zeus who gave her to Hades, her father's brother, to be called his buxom wife. And Hades seized her and took her loudly crying in his chariot down to his realm of mist and gloom. Yet, goddess, cease your loud lament and keep not vain anger unrelentingly: Aidoneus, the Ruler of Many, is no unfitting husband among the deathless gods for your child, being your own brother and born of the same stock: also, for honor, he has that third share which he received when division was made at the first, and is appointed lord of those among whom he dwells.”

So he spake, and called to his horses: and at his chiding they quickly whirled the swift chariot along, like long-winged birds.

But grief yet more terrible and savage came into the heart of Demeter, and thereafter she was so angered with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos that she avoided the gathering of the gods and high Olympus, and went to the towns and rich fields of men, disfiguring her form a long while. And no one of men or deep-bosomed women knew her when they saw her, until she came to the house of wise Celeus who then was lord of fragrant Eleusis. Vexed in her dear heart, she sat near the wayside by the Maiden Well, from which the women of the place were used to draw water, in a shady place over which grew an olive

shrub. And she was like an ancient woman who is cut off from childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite, like the nurses of kings' children who deal justice, or like the house-keepers in their echoing halls. There the daughters of Celeus, son of Eleusis, saw her, as they were coming for easy-drawn water, to carry it in pitchers of bronze to their dear father's house: four were they and like goddesses in the flower of their girlhood, Callidice and Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoe who was the eldest of them all. They knew her not, —for the gods are not easily discerned by mortals —, but standing nearby her spoke winged words:

“Old mother, whence and who are you of folk born long ago? Why are you gone away from the city and do not draw near the houses? For there in the shady halls are women of just such age as you, and others younger; and they would welcome you both by word and by deed.”

Thus they said. And she, that queen among goddesses answered them saying: “Hail, dear children, whosoever you are of woman-kind. I will tell you my story; for it is not unseemly that I should tell you truly what you ask. Doso is my name, for my stately mother gave it me. And now I am come from Crete over the sea's wide back, —not willingly; but against my liking, by force of strength, pirates brought me thence. Afterwards they put in with their swift craft to Thoricus, and there the women landed on the shore in full throng and the men likewise, and they began to make ready a meal by the stern-cables of the ship. But my heart craved not pleasant food, and I fled secretly across the dark country and escaped my masters that they should not take me unpurchased across the sea, there to win a price for me. And so I wandered and am come here: and I know not at all what land this is or what people are in it. But may all those who dwell on Olympus give you husbands and birth of children as parents desire, so you take pity on me, maidens, and show me this clearly that I may learn, dear children, to the house of what man and woman I may go, to work for them cheerfully at such tasks as belong to a woman of my age. Well could I nurse a new born child, holding him in my arms, or keep house, or spread my masters' bed in a recess of the well-built chamber, or teach the women their work.”

So said the goddess. And straightway the unwed maiden Callidice, goodliest in form of the daughters of Celeus, answered her and said:

“Mother, what the gods send us, we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer; for they are much stronger than we. But now I will teach you clearly, telling you the names of men who have great power and honor here and are chief among the people, guarding our city's coif of towers by their wisdom and true judgements: there is wise Triptolemus and Dioclus and Polyxeinus and blameless Eumolpus and Dolichus and our own brave father. All these have wives who manage in the house, and no one of them, as soon as she had seen you, would dishonor you and turn you from the house, but they will welcome you; for indeed you are godlike. But if you will, stay here; and we will go to our father's house and tell Metaneira, our deep-bosomed mother, all this matter fully, that she may bid you rather come to our home than search after the houses of others. She has an only son, late-born, who is being nursed in our well-built house, a child of many prayers and welcome: if you could bring him up until he reached the full measure of youth, any one of womankind who should see you would straightway envy you, such gifts would our mother give for his upbringing.”

So she spake: and the goddess bowed her head in assent. And they filled their shining vessels with water and carried them off rejoicing. Quickly they came to their father's great house and straightway told their mother according as they had heard and seen. Then she bade them go with all speed and invite the stranger to come for a measureless hire. As hinds or heifers in spring time, when sated with pasture, bound about a meadow, so they, holding up the folds of their lovely garments, darted down the hollow path, and their hair like a crocus flower streamed about their shoulders. And they found the good goddess near the wayside where they had left her before, and led her to the house of their dear father. And she walked behind, distressed in her dear heart, with her head veiled and wearing a dark cloak which waved about the slender feet of the goddess.

Soon they came to the house of heaven-nurtured Celeus and went through the portico to where their queenly mother sat by a pillar of the close-fitted roof, holding her son, a tender scion, in her bosom. And the girls ran to her. But the goddess walked to the threshold: and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then awe and reverence and pale fear took hold of Metaneira, and she rose up from her couch before Demeter, and bade her be seated. But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Iambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face. A long time she sat upon the stool without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drink, because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until careful Iambe—who pleased her moods in aftertime also—moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and cheer her heart. Then Metaneira filled a cup with sweet wine and offered it to her; but she refused it, for she said it was not lawful for her to drink red wine, but bade them mix meal and water with soft mint and give her to drink. And Metaneira mixed the draught and gave it to the goddess as she bade. So the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament³ ...

And of them all, well-girded Metaneira first began to speak: “Hail, lady! For I think you are not meanly but nobly born; truly dignity and grace are conspicuous upon your eyes as in the eyes of kings that deal justice. Yet we mortals bear perforce what the gods send us, though we be grieved; for a yoke is set upon our necks. But now, since you are come here, you shall have what I can bestow: and nurse me this child whom the gods gave me in my old age and beyond my hope, a son much prayed for. If you should bring him up until he reach the full measure of youth, any one of woman-kind that sees you will straightway envy you, so great reward would I give for his upbringing.”

Then rich-haired Demeter answered her: “And to you, also, lady, all hail, and may the gods give you good! Gladly will I take the boy to my breast, as you bid me, and will nurse him. Never, I ween, through any heedlessness of his nurse shall witchcraft hurt him nor yet the Undercutter: for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter, [230] and I know an excellent safeguard against woeful witchcraft.”

When she had so spoken, she took the child in her fragrant bosom with her divine hands: and his mother was glad in her heart. So the goddess nursed in the palace Demophon, wise Celeus' goodly son whom well-girded Metaneira bare. And the child grew like some immortal being, not fed with food nor nourished at the breast: for by day rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of a god and breathe

sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. But at night she would hide him like a brand in the heart of the fire, unknown to his dear parents. And it wrought great wonder in these that he grew beyond his age; for he was like the gods face to face. And she would have made him deathless and unageing, had not well-girded Metaneira in her heedlessness kept watch by night from her sweet-smelling chamber and spied. But she wailed and smote her two hips, because she feared for her son and was greatly distraught in her heart; so she lamented and uttered winged words:

“Demophon, my son, the strange woman buries you deep in fire and works grief and bitter sorrow for me.”

Thus she spoke, mourning. And the bright goddess, lovely-crowned Demeter, heard her, and was wroth with her. So with her divine hands she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Metaneira had born unhopèd-for in the palace, and cast him from her to the ground; for she was terribly angry in her heart. Forthwith she said to well-girded Metaneira:

“Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for —be witness the oath of the gods, the relentless water of Styx — I would have made your dear son deathless and unaging all his days and would have bestowed on him everlasting honor, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates. Yet shall unfailing honor always rest upon him, because he lay upon my knees and slept in my arms. But, as the years move round and when he is in his prime, the sons of the Eleusinians shall ever wage war and dread strife with one another continually. Lo! I am that Demeter who has share of honor and is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying gods and mortal men. But now, let all the people build me a great temple and an altar below it and beneath the city and its sheer wall upon a rising hillock above Callichorus. And I myself will teach my rites, that hereafter you may reverently perform them and so win the favour of my heart.”

When she had so said, the goddess changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightning. And so she went out from the palace.

And straightway Metaneira's knees were loosed and she remained speechless for a long while and did not remember to take up her late-born son from the ground. But his sisters heard his pitiful wailing and sprang down from their well-spread beds: one of them took up the child in her arms and laid him in her bosom, while another revived the fire, and a third rushed with soft feet to bring their mother from her fragrant chamber. And they gathered about the struggling child and washed him, embracing him lovingly; but he was not comforted, because nurses and handmaids much less skilful were holding him now.

All night long they sought to appease the glorious goddess, quaking with fear. But, as soon as dawn began to show, they told powerful Celeus all things without fail, as the lovely-crowned goddess Demeter charged them. So Celeus called the countless people to an assembly and bade them make a goodly temple for rich-haired Demeter and an altar

upon the rising hillock. And they obeyed him right speedily and harkened to his voice, doing as he commanded. As for the child, he grew like an immortal being.

Now when they had finished building and had drawn back from their toil, they went every man to his house. But golden-haired Demeter sat there apart from all the blessed gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over the all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them who dwell on Olympus of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart. First he sent golden-winged Iris to call rich-haired Demeter, lovely in form. So he commanded. And she obeyed the dark-clouded Son of Cronos, and sped with swift feet across the space between. She came to the stronghold of fragrant Eleusis, and there finding dark-cloaked Demeter in her temple, spake to her and uttered winged words:

“Demeter, father Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, calls you to come join the tribes of the eternal gods: come therefore, and let not the message I bring from Zeus pass unobeyed.”

Thus said Iris imploring her. But Demeter's heart was not moved. Then again the father sent forth all the blessed and eternal gods besides: and they came, one after the other, and kept calling her and offering many very beautiful gifts and whatever rights she might be pleased to choose among the deathless gods. Yet no one was able to persuade her mind and will, so wroth was she in her heart; but she stubbornly rejected all their words: for she vowed that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus nor let fruit spring out of the ground, until she beheld with her eyes her own fair-faced daughter.

Now when all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer heard this, he sent the Slayer of Argus whose wand is of gold to Erebus, so that having won over Hades with soft words, he might lead forth chaste Persephone to the light from the misty gloom to join the gods, and that her mother might see her with her eyes and cease from her anger. And Hermes obeyed, and leaving the house of Olympus, straightway sprang down with speed to the hidden places of the earth. And he found the lord Hades in his house seated upon a couch, and his shy mate with him, much reluctant, because she yearned for her mother. But she was afar off, brooding on her fell design because of the deeds of the blessed gods. And the strong Slayer of Argus drew near and said:

“Dark-haired Hades, ruler over the departed, father Zeus bids me bring noble Persephone forth from Erebus unto the gods, that her mother may see her with her eyes and cease from her dread anger with the immortals; for now she plans an awful deed, to destroy the weakly tribes of earth-born men by keeping seed hidden beneath the earth, and so she makes an end of the honors of the undying gods. For she keeps fearful anger and does not consort with the gods, but sits aloof in her fragrant temple, dwelling in the rocky hold of Eleusis.”

So he said. And Aidoneus, ruler over the dead, smiled grimly and obeyed the behest of Zeus the king. For he straightway urged wise Persephone, saying:

“Go now, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother, go, and feel kindly in your heart towards me: be not so exceedingly cast down; for I shall be no unfitting husband for you among the deathless gods, that am own brother to father Zeus. And while you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently performing rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore.”

When he said this, wise Persephone was filled with joy and hastily sprang up for gladness. But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with grave, dark-robed Demeter. Then Aidoneus the Ruler of Many openly got ready his deathless horses beneath the golden chariot. And she mounted on the chariot, and the strong Slayer of Argus took reins and whip in his dear hands and drove forth from the hall, the horses speeding readily. Swiftly they traversed their long course, and neither the sea nor river-waters nor grassy glens nor mountain-peaks checked the career of the immortal horses, but they claved the deep air above them as they went. And Hermes brought them to the place where rich-crowned Demeter was staying and checked them before her fragrant temple.

And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side, when she saw her mother's sweet eyes, left the chariot and horses, and leaped down to run to her, and falling upon her neck, embraced her. But while Demeter was still holding her dear child in her arms, her heart suddenly misgave her for some snare, so that she feared greatly and ceased fondling her daughter and asked of her at once: “My child, tell me, surely you have not tasted any food while you were below? Speak out and hide nothing, but let us both know. For if you have not, you shall come back from loathly Hades and live with me and your father, the dark-clouded Son of Cronos and be honored by all the deathless gods; but if you have tasted food, you must go back again beneath the secret places of the earth, there to dwell a third part of the seasons every year: yet for the two parts you shall be with me and the other deathless gods. But when the earth shall bloom with the fragrant flowers of spring in every kind, then from the realm of darkness and gloom thou shalt come up once more to be a wonder for gods and mortal men. And now tell me how he rapt you away to the realm of darkness and gloom, and by what trick did the strong Host of Many beguile you?”

Then beautiful Persephone answered her thus: “Mother, I will tell you all without error. When luck-bringing Hermes came, swift messenger from my father the Son of Cronos and the other Sons of Heaven, bidding me come back from Erebus that you might see me with your eyes and so cease from your anger and fearful wrath against the gods, I sprang up at once for joy; but he secretly put in my mouth sweet food, a pomegranate seed, and forced me to taste against my will. Also I will tell how he rapt me away by the deep plan of my father the Son of Cronos and carried me off beneath the depths of the earth, and will relate the whole matter as you ask. All we were playing in a lovely meadow, Leucippe and Phaeno and Electra and Ianthe, Melita also and Iache with Rhodea and Callirhoe and Melobosis and Tyche and Ocyrhoe, fair as a flower, Chryseis, Ianeira, Acaste and Admete and Rhodope and Pluto and charming Calypso; Styx too was there and Urania and lovely Galaxaura with Pallas who rouses battles and Artemis delighting in arrows: we were playing and gathering sweet flowers in our hands, soft crocuses mingled with irises and hyacinths, and rose-blooms and lilies, marvelous to see, and the narcissus which the wide earth caused to grow yellow as a crocus. That I plucked in my

joy; but the earth parted beneath, and there the strong lord, the Host of Many, sprang forth and in his golden chariot he bore me away, all unwilling, beneath the earth: then I cried with a shrill cry. All this is true, sore though it grieves me to tell the tale.”

So did they then, with hearts at one, greatly cheer each the other's soul and spirit with many an embrace: their hearts had relief from their griefs while each took and gave back joyousness.

Then bright-coiffed Hecate came near to them, and often did she embrace the daughter of holy Demeter: and from that time the lady Hecate was minister and companion to Persephone.

And all-seeing Zeus sent a messenger to them, rich-haired Rhea, to bring dark-cloaked Demeter to join the families of the gods: and he promised to give her what rights she should choose among the deathless gods and agreed that her daughter should go down for the third part of the circling year to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts should live with her mother and the other deathless gods. Thus he commanded. And the goddess did not disobey the message of Zeus; swiftly she rushed down from the peaks of Olympus and came to the plain of Rharus, rich, fertile corn-land once, but then in nowise fruitful, for it lay idle and utterly leafless, because the white grain was hidden by design of trim-ankled Demeter. But afterwards, as spring-time waxed, it was soon to be waving with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows to be loaded with grain upon the ground, while others would already be bound in sheaves. There first she landed from the fruitless upper air: and glad were the goddesses to see each other and cheered in heart. Then bright-coiffed Rhea said to Demeter:

“Come, my daughter; for far-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer calls you to join the families of the gods, and has promised to give you what rights you please among the deathless gods, and has agreed that for a third part of the circling year your daughter shall go down to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts shall be with you and the other deathless gods: so has he declared it shall be and has bowed his head in token. But come, my child, obey, and be not too angry unrelentingly with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos; but rather increase forthwith for men the fruit that gives them life.”

So spake Rhea. And rich-crowned Demeter did not refuse but straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers. Then she went, and to the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, and to doughty Eumolpus and Celeus, leader of the people, she showed the conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries, to Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles also, —awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice. Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiate and who has no part in them, never has lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.

But when the bright goddess had taught them all, they went to Olympus to the gathering of the other gods. And there they dwell beside Zeus who delights in thunder, awful and reverend goddesses. Right blessed is he among men on earth whom they freely love: soon they do send Plutus as guest to his great house, Plutus who gives wealth to mortal men.

And now, queen of the land of sweet Eleusis and sea-girt Paros and rocky Antron, lady, giver of good gifts, bringer of seasons, queen Deo, be gracious, you and your daughter all beautiful Persephone, and for my song grant me heart-cheering substance. And now I will remember you and another song also.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetess Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Of Demeter, ruler of corn-rich Sikelia, and of the violet-garlanded Kore sing...**

Bacchylides, Fragment 3

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Kallimachos' Hymn 6 to Demeter**

To Demeter

As the Basket comes, greet it, ye women, saying 'Demeter, greatly hail! Lady of much bounty, of many measures of corn.' As the Basket comes, from the ground shall ye behold it, ye uninitiated, and gaze not from the roof or from aloft--child nor wife nor maid hath shed her hair--neither then nor when we spit from parched mouths fasting. Hesperos from the clouds marks the time of its coming: Hesperos, who alone persuaded Demeter to drink, what time she pursued the unknown tracks of her stolen daughter.

Hail, Goddess, and save this people in harmony and in prosperity, and in the fields bring us all pleasant things! Feed our kine, bring us flocks, bring us the corn-ear, bring us

harvest! And nurse peace, that he who sows may also reap. Be gracious, O thrice-prayed for, great Queen of Goddesses!"

Translated by A. W. Mair

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kore: Khaire Kore, maiden Goddess of spring's bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water to Kore**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Orphic Hymn 29 Hymn To Persephone**

Hymn to Persephone

. . . radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons,
revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals,
in spring you take your joy in the meadow of breezes,
you show your holy figure in branches teeming with grass-green fruits,
in autumn you were made a kidnapper's bride.
You alone are life and death to toiling mortals,
O Persephone, you nourish all, always, and kill them, too.
Hearken, O blessed Goddess, send forth the fruits of the earth
as you blossom in peace, and in gentle-handed health
bring a blessed life and a splendid old age to him who is sailing
to your realm, O queen, and to mighty Plouton's kingdom.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

"May blessings go with us and may the Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!"

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth,

in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Purification Rite) February 19, day time

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetic Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, you who taught us to work the earth and provides for us so bountifully...**

Demeter first turned the earth with the curved plough; She first gave corn and crops to
 bless the land; She first gave laws; all things are Demeter's gift. Of Demeter I must sing.
 Oh that my song may hymn the Goddess' praise as She deserves, a Goddess who
 deserved high hymns of praise.

From Ovid, Metamorphoses 5

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 41 To Mother Antaia**

To Mother Antaia

Queen Antaia, Goddess and many-named mother
 of immortal Gods and mortal men,
 weary from searching, weary from wandering far and wide,
 you ended your fast in the valley of Eleusis,
 you came to Hades for noble Persephone.
 Your guide was the innocent child of Dysaules,

who brought the news of pure Chthonic Zeus' holy union;
you bore divine Euboulos by yielding to human need.
O Goddess, O Queen to whom many pray, I beseech you
to come graciously to your pious initiate.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to the Horai: Khaire Horai, Eumonie and Dike and thrice-blessed Eirene maiden Goddess of spring's bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 43 To the Hoai**

To the Horai

Horai, daughters of Themis and Lord Zeus –
Eumonie and Dike and thrice-blessed Eirene –
pure spirits of spring and of the blossoming meadow,
you are found in every color and in all the scents wafted by the breezes.
Ever-blooming, revolving and sweet-faced, O Horai,
you cloak yourselves with the dew of luxuriant flowers.
You are holy Persephone's companions at play, when the Fates
and the Graces, in circling dances come forth to light,
pleasing Zeus and their fruit-giving mother.
Come to the new initiates and their reverent and holy rites
and bring seasons perfect for growth of goodly fruit.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Make a sacrifice of pork meat and/or flat bread cakes called 'pelanoi' on a low-lying altar to the chthonic deities**
- ◆ **Prayers to Demeter and Kore**

“Blessed Mother and Daughter divine, who watch over mankind and Earth's bounty. Around You the seasons revolve, both of the harvest and life. It is you who allow us to reap the rewards of our labour, who help us fill up our bellies and allow our children to grow strong. It is You who guide us now, as we walk the path of the ancients. Guard over us and purify us as we prepare to take part in Your rites.”

- ◆ **Pour out heavily salted water over your head to emulate the dip into the sea the ancient initiates would have taken to purify themselves.**

“Make us clean!”

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

- ◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Study Day: The Underworld) February 20, night time

Today we study the mythology of the Underworld with a guided meditation. In Hellenismos, we have no fear of death or what happens after. We are, however aware that death and the dead is and are not part of life. These rites, all rites tied to the Eleusinian Mysteries are—by their very nature—out of the ordinary. Mystical. One does not undertake a meditation to the Underworld lightly, so we will undergo it with a purification before and after.

A guided meditation is perhaps best described as a story, read or told to provoke an image and a sense of a journey. The goal is to teach by way of experience when something cannot be experienced. The following meditation is, thus, a story of sorts. It's based upon ancient Hellenic sources describing the Underworld, but it is important to note that there was never a consensus on what the underworld was like and what, exactly happened after death at all. Some ancient Hellenes believed in an Underworld, other did not believe in one at all. We have no idea what views were held of the Underworld in the Eleusinian Mysteries, but it stands to reason they were founded on Homeric views. The Mysteries were old, after all, and their founding mythology is the in the Homeric hymn to Demeter. This meditation is thus based upon that view, with creative license.

Before this meditation, you might want to create a suitable atmosphere—a dark room with a burning candle, incense (storax if you have it), and enough heat to be comfortable even when not moving.

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)**
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**

- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Settle in a comfortable spot, somewhere you can sit for a while without cramping up. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and become aware of all the daily distractions— then let them go. This moment is the only moment that exists. Your direct surroundings are the only surroundings that exist. Now, read this meditation a few times (or record it) and then close your eyes and take the journey yourself.**

Imagine death came suddenly and was mercifully painless. You are aware you have passed: you can hear the keening of the women in your family, taste the metal of the oboloi in your mouth. You are no longer cold, or hot, and there is no pain. Sensation is for the living, and your memories start to fade already. You are no longer part of the living. You are dead and your guide is waiting for you.

Hermes Psychopompos, the winged guide of the newly dead, descends and takes your hand. Below you is the ocean: Okeanos' divine body. You used to watch it glisten in Helios' bright rays, but today, everything is dull and lifeless. You are speeding west, guided by the blessed Immortal. Below you, you can see land again and a mighty river. The land draws you down and you stand on the ground without feeling it. It is here that Hermes Psychopompos leaves you, in the capable hands of Kharon, on the bank of the river Acheron.

The ferryman looks old and ageless at the same time. He holds out his hand but you can't understand what he wants from you. Then, his hand closes around a coin and he steps aside to let you into his boat. Without moving, you are suddenly on the creaking longboat, looking to the shore where shadowy figures of the dead gather, longing to make the journey with you. But they have no coin to hand over and are forced to wander the bank of the Kokytos river year after year, until the ferryman takes pity on them. Today is not their day.

The river fades into the darkness of a cave. The river of woe joins with the river of hate; the river Styx that seems to have no end. Kharon moves the boat forward in a steady rhythm, his back arching as the large boon he uses to push the boat forward pushes deep into the mud below.

You reach the dock sooner than you expected to. Kharon waits silently for you to get off of his boat. You dare not move. Beyond is a field of grey, a sunless cavern filled with the shadows of the dead. The fields of Asphodel; the dreary resting place of the common Hellen. Before the fields stands a huge gate and an equally huge dog with three growling heads, foaming at each mouth. Kharon waits and then you are in the field. The gate stands behind you, Kerberos a constant reminder you can never go back.

You wander, still remembering much of your life. The fall you took as a child that gave you a weak knee, the smile of your spouse on your wedding day. You remember your child being born. You will see them again, eventually, and until then, you will hold on to the memories.

You walk through the field, to the compound in the distance. Hades' compound, where the Dread Lord and His beautiful wife live. Thus, you come upon the judges. Rhadamanthys, Minos and Aiakos wait for you at the trivium in the courtyard of the compound; the trivium, Hekate's sacred crossroads. If you still had a heart, you would feel it beating in your throat now. But you do not. Any decision the judges make is alright. Tartaros is not your place, you know that much. You have honored the Theoi, you have done right by your family. You do not fear judgement. You wish to go back to the Asphodel meadows and drink from the river Mnemosyne, you long to hold on to memories that are already fading slowly. More, you wish to reach Elysium, the island of the blessed. In the distance, the Lord of the Dead and his Queen Persephone must be.

Your life is judged, you are judged. You wait, and look to each side. Left for Tartaros, where the river Phlegethon burns but leaves everything it touches intact. Right for Elysium where the ghosts of the blessed reside amongst the blameless heroes. Or back the way you came for the meadows where Lethe flows free, where the dead flutter around like bats, and where those initiated into the Mysteries drink from Mnemosyne so they will not forget their previous life when they reincarnate. You wait, and are judged."

- ◆ **Take some time to try to experience this place, this world of the dead, the future and the home of Blessed Persephone and Her husband Hades. Then slowly become aware of your heartbeat, your breathing. You are, in fact, very much alive right now. So allow yourself to return to the land of the living. Become aware of your surroundings and of the daily goings on. Relish them, as stressful or tedious as they might be—because one day you will be without them and you might miss them more than you know.**

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and cleanse both me, and it, of the rites that have unfold in this place, at this time.”

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Gods watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

- ◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Study Day: Iakkhos) February 21, daytime

Demeter and Kore are not the only Theoi overlooking the Mysteries. Especially during the Lesser Mysteries, there was another, usually described as the son of Demeter and Zeus who oversaw the proceedings and acted as an attendant to Demeter and Kore. His name is Iakkhos and He is the personification of the ritual cry of joy called 'iakhe' of the procession of the initiates. Iakkhos was sometimes identified with the god Dionysos, in the same way that the Eleusinian Hekate was equated with Artemis. This is especially true for the Orphic Tradition. Iakkhos was depicted as a young man holding the twin torches of the Mysteries, usually in the company of Demeter, Kore and other Eleusinian gods.

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetess Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
revolves in endless and awesome flow.
But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense or myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Zeus: King of all, you who rules with Hera Queen of Heaven, Guardian, Protector and Preserver of boundaries, Bringer of safety and peace**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Zeus**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 23 To Zeus**

To Zeus

Of Zeus, best and greatest of the gods, I will sing,
the wide-sounding ruler, the one that brings to fulfillment,
who consults closely with Themis as she sits leaning against him.
Be favorable, wide-sounding son of Kronos, greatest and most glorious.

He does not sit upon his throne by mandate of another and hold his dominion beneath a mightier. No one sits above him whose power he holds in awe. He speaks, and it is done – he hastens to execute whatever his counseling mind conceives.

Aeschylus – Suppliant Maidens – Chorus

But may Zeus grant that it go well with us. For Zeus' desire is hard to trace: it shines everywhere, even in gloom, together with fortune obscure to mortal men.

Aeschylus – Suppliant Maidens – Chorus

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, you who taught us to work the earth and provides for us so bountifully...**

I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful Goddess, of her and of her daughter lovely Kore. Hail, Goddess!

From Homeric Hymn 13 to Demeter

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 40 To Eleusinian Demeter**

To Eleusinian Demeter

Deo, divine mother of all, goddess of many names,
revered Demeter, nurturer of youths, giver of prosperity and wealth,
you nourish the ears of corn, O giver of all,
you delight in peace and in toilsome labor.
Present at sowing, heaping, and threshing, O spirit of the unripe fruit,
you dwell in the sacred valley of Eleusis.
Charming and lovely, you give sustenance to all mortals;
you were the first to yoke the plowing ox,
the first to send up from below a rich, a lovely harvest for mortals.
You are growth and blossoming, O illustrious companion of Bromios,
torch-bearing and pure, you delight in the summer's yield.
From beneath the earth you appear, gentle to all,
O holy and youth-nurturing lover of children and of fair offspring.
You yolk your chariot to bridled dragons,
round your throne you whirl and howl in ecstasy.
You are an only daughter, but you have many children and many powers over mortals;
the variety of flowers reflect your myriad faces and your sacred blossoms.
Come, O blessed and pure one, come with the fruits of summer,
bearing peace, bring the welcome rule of law;
bring riches, too, and prosperity, and bring health that governs all.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kore: Khaire Kore, maiden Goddess of spring's bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water to Kore**

◆ **Excerpt from Orphic Hymn 29 Hymn To Persephone**

Hymn to Persephone

. . . radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons,
revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals,
in spring you take your joy in the meadow of breezes,
you show your holy figure in branches teeming with grass-green fruits,
in autumn you were made a kidnapper's bride.
You alone are life and death to toiling mortals,
O Persephone, you nourish all, always, and kill them, too.
Hearken, O blessed Goddess, send forth the fruits of the earth
as you blossom in peace, and in gentle-handed health
bring a blessed life and a splendid old age to him who is sailing
to your realm, O queen, and to mighty Plouton's kingdom.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Iakkhos: Khaire Iakkhos, young and ageless Divine whose cry we utter...**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Iakkhos**
- ◆ **(Part of) Aristophanes' 'Frogs'**

O Iakkhos! power excelling, here in stately temples dwelling.
O Iakkhos! O Iakkhos! Come to tread this verdant level, come to dance in mystic revel,
come whilst round thy forehead hurtles many a wreath of fruitful myrtles,
come with wild and saucy paces mingling in our joyous dance,
pure and holy, which embraces all the charms of all the Kharites,
when the mystic choirs advance.

Come, arise, from sleep awaking, come the fiery torches shaking,
O Iakkhos! O Iakkhos! Call we now the youthful god, call him hither without delay,
him who travels amongst his Chorus, dancing along on the Sacred Way.
O, come with the joy of thy festival song, O, come to the goddess,
O, mix with our throng untired, though the journey be never so long.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, Iakkhos, beside me advance!

For fun, and for cheapness, our dress thou hast rent, through thee we may dance to the top
of our bent,
reviling, and jeering, and none will resent.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, Iakkhos, beside me advance!
A sweet pretty girl I observed in the show, her robe had been torn in the scuffle,
and lo, there peeped through the tatters a bosom of snow.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, Iakkhos, beside me advance!

Translation by O'Neill

- ◆ **Prayers**

“Blessed Iakkhos, you without whose cry we could not be initiated. You whose voice is at the very core of these rites, kindly guides us through the rite to come. Bring us pride in uttering your name, purify us and light our way with your torches. You who is a son to the Son of Kronos, a son to the Lady of the Grain and a brother to the Wife of Khthonic Zeus, guide us!”

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Gods and Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Initiatory rite) February 22, night time

This is a night time ritual, so carry a torch (or candle) on your way to your altar. Preferably, the rest of the space is completely dark, or lit with small lights/candles. Make the journey as long as you can. With every step, remember how you started on this journey six days ago, with all of us, and with the spirits of the ancient Hellenes walking with you. Now you are alone, just you and the Theoi. The Mysteries can only be experienced alone, after all, and never shared afterwards. The Theoi have taken your hand in guidance. Your body is pure. Your mind is pure. It's time to enter the rite and commit to the Mysteries.

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**

- ◆ **Lighting of the sacrificial fire**
- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, Lady of much bounty, of many measures of corn...**
- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Homeric Hymn 2**

To Demeter

Golden-haired Demeter sat at Eleusis, apart from all the blessed Gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over the all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them who dwell on Olympos of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart.

But the Goddess walked to the threshold of the house of heaven-nurtured Keleus and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then Metaneira filled a cup with sweet wine and offered it to her; but she refused it, for she said it was not lawful for her to drink red wine, but bade them mix meal and water with soft mint and give her to drink. And Metaneira mixed the draught and gave it to the Goddess as she bade. So the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament.

Then rich-haired Demeter answered her: "And to you, also, lady, all hail, and may the Gods give you good! Gladly will I take your boy to my breast and will nurse him. "When she had so spoken, she took the child in her fragrant bosom with her divine hands: and his mother was glad in her heart. So the Goddess nursed in the palace Demophoon, wise Celeus' goodly son whom well-girded Metaneira bare. And the child grew like some immortal being, not fed with food nor nourished at the breast: for by day rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of a God and breathe sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. But at night she would hide him like a brand in the heart of the fire, unknown to his dear parents. And she would have made him deathless and unageing, had not well-girded Metaneira in her heedlessness kept watch by night from her sweet-smelling chamber and spied. But she wailed and smote her two hips, because she feared for her son and was greatly distraught in her heart; so she lamented and uttered winged words: "Demophoon, my son, the strange woman buries you deep in fire and works grief and bitter sorrow for me."

Thus she spoke, mourning. And the bright Goddess, lovely-crowned Demeter, heard her, and was wroth with her. So with her divine hands she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Metaneira had born unhoped-for in the palace, and cast him from her to the ground; for she was terribly angry in her heart. Forthwith she said to well-girded Metaneira: "Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for -- be witness the oath of the Gods, the relentless water of Styx -- I would have made your dear son deathless and unaging all his days and would have bestowed on him everlasting honor, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates. Yet shall

unfailing honor always rest upon him, because he lay upon my knees and slept in my arms. But, as the years move round and when he is in his prime, the sons of the Eleusinians shall ever wage war and dread strife with one another continually. Lo! I am that Demeter who has share of honor and is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying Gods and mortal men. But now, let all the people build be a great temple and an altar below it and beneath the city and its sheer wall upon a rising hillock above Kallichoros. And I myself will teach my rites, that hereafter you may reverently perform them and so win the favor of my heart.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White

◆ **Prayers**

“Thus is the tale of the Mysteries and with this knowledge I walk upon Your altar, Blessed Demeter of the corn. Watch over me tonight as I submit to Your will and Your knowledge. Prepare me for the gift of Your secrets and your blessings.”

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kore: Khaire Kore, spouse of Aidoneus, host of many...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water to Kore**
- ◆ **Theognis, Fragment 1**

To Persephone

Persephone who impairs the mind of mortals and brings them forgetfulness. No one else has ever contrived this, once death's dark cloud has enveloped him and he has come to the shadowy place of the dead and passed the black gates which hold back the souls of the dead, for all their protestations.

◆ **Prayers**

“Blessed Kore, dread Goddess who journeys to and from the underworld where we shall all depart to once the Theoi deem it is time. As you depart, so we suffer and as you rise, so we thrive. You who rules over our lives and who's Mother provides us with all means for our survival. Once I come to You, begging for initiation into Your domain, whisper kindly in my ear. Lay your hand on me once my time comes and accept me unto you.”

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Iakkhos: Khaire Iakkhos, young and ageless Divine whose cry we utter...**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Iakkhos**
- ◆ **(Part of) Aristophanes' 'Frogs'**

O Iakkhos! power excelling, here in stately temples dwelling.
O Iakkhos! O Iakkhos! Come to tread this verdant level, come to dance in mystic revel,
come whilst round thy forehead hurtles many a wreath of fruitful myrtles,
come with wild and saucy paces mingling in our joyous dance,
pure and holy, which embraces all the charms of all the Kharites,
when the mystic choirs advance.

Come, arise, from sleep awaking, come the fiery torches shaking,

O Iakkhos! O Iakkhos! Call we now the youthful god, call him hither without delay,
him who travels amongst his Chorus, dancing along on the Sacred Way.
O, come with the joy of thy festival song, O, come to the goddess,
O, mix with our throng untired, though the journey be never so long.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, lakkhos, beside me advance!

For fun, and for cheapness, our dress thou hast rent, through thee we may dance to the top
of our bent,
reviling, and jeering, and none will resent.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, lakkhos, beside me advance!
A sweet pretty girl I observed in the show, her robe had been torn in the scuffle,
and lo, there peeped through the tatters a bosom of snow.
O Lord of the frolic and dance, lakkhos, beside me advance!

Translation by O'Neill

◆ **Prayers**

“Blessed Iakkhos, you without whose cry we could not be initiated. You whose voice is at the very core of these rites, kindly guide us through the rite to come. Bring us pride in uttering your name, purify us and light our way with your torches. You who is a son to the Son of Kronos, a son to the Lady of the Grain and a brother to the Wife of Khthonic Zeus, guide us!”

◆ **Present Demeter with a drawing or image of a snake, or a snake skin if you have it.**

“Blessed Demeter, I present you [this] as a symbol of dedication and courage. I have no fear of death, nor dying. I have trust in You and in Your rites.”

◆ **Prayers**

“Blessed is he who hath seen these things before he goes beneath the hollow earth; for he understands the end of mortal life, and the beginning of a new life given of God.”

Pindar, Dirges Fragment 137

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**



Ritual for the Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries (Closing rite) February 23, daytime

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it, for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetic Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Demeter: Khaire Demeter, you who taught us to work the earth and provides for us so bountifully...**

I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful Goddess, of her and of her daughter lovely
 Kore. Hail, Goddess!

From Homeric Hymn 13 to Demeter

- ◆ **Libation of a kykeon (barley meal, water, ground goat cheese, mint) to Demeter**
- ◆ **Excerpt from Homeric Hymn 2**

To Demeter

Golden-haired Demeter sat at Eleusis, apart from all the blessed Gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over the all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them

who dwell on Olympos of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart.

◆ **Orphic Hymn 40 To Eleusinian Demeter**

To Eleusinian Demeter

Deo, divine mother of all, goddess of many names,
revered Demeter, nurturer of youths, giver of prosperity and wealth,
you nourish the ears of corn, O giver of all,
you delight in peace and in toilsome labor.
Present at sowing, heaping, and threshing, O spirit of the unripe fruit,
you dwell in the sacred valley of Eleusis.
Charming and lovely, you give sustenance to all mortals;
you were the first to yoke the plowing ox,
the first to send up from below a rich, a lovely harvest for mortals.
You are growth and blossoming, O illustrious companion of Bromios,
torch-bearing and pure, you delight in the summer's yield.
From beneath the earth you appear, gentle to all,
O holy and youth-nurturing lover of children and of fair offspring.
You yolk your chariot to bridled dragons,
round your throne you whirl and howl in ecstasy.
You are an only daughter, but you have many children and many powers over mortals;
the variety of flowers reflect your myriad faces and your sacred blossoms.
Come, O blessed and pure one, come with the fruits of summer,
bearing peace, bring the welcome rule of law;
bring riches, too, and prosperity, and bring health that governs all.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kore: Khaire Kore, maiden Goddess of spring's bounty...**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water to Kore**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 29 Hymn To Persephone**

Hymn to Persephone

Persephone, blessed daughter of great Zeus, sole offspring
of Demeter, come and accept this gracious sacrifice.
Much honored spouse of Plouton, discreet and life-giving,
you command the gates of Hades in the bowels of the earth,
lovely-tressed Praxidike, pure bloom of Deo,
mother of the Erinyes, queen of the nether world,
secretly sired by Zeus in clandestine union.
Mother of loud-roaring, many-shaped Eobouleus,
radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons,
revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals,
in spring you take your joy in the meadow of breezes,
you show your holy figure in branches teeming with grass-green fruits,
in autumn you were made a kidnapper's bride.

You alone are life and death to toiling mortals,
O Persephone, you nourish all, always, and kill them, too.
Hearken, O blessed Goddess, send forth the fruits of the earth
as you blossom in peace, and in gentle-handed health
bring a blessed life and a splendid old age to him who is sailing
to your realm, O queen, and to mighty Plouton's kingdom.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **You have come to the end of the Lesser Mysteries, the Rites of Teaching. The ancient Hellenes would have packed up, cleaned up, and prepared themselves for the return to their daily lives and the wait ahead. You, too, must now move forward, but not before overthinking your experiences. Take the time to meditate on what you have gone through, of how you felt, of how you feel now.**

“Blessed Demeter and golden haired Kore. I have tried to envision the path of the ancients as Herakles walked to the river, as He was purified, as he was taught. When the Mysteries come, I will be ready to partake of them. I pray that I may always carry Your blessings, Goddesses of abundance who watch kindly over the human race.”

- ◆ **Take a moment to mentally end this journey. Once you are ready, you may finish the rite.**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us and may the Goddesses watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-
wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for
other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**