

# Saturnalia Ritual

## BRIEFING

### Brief Outline:

Earth Mother Prayer

Procession & Purification

Grounding/Centering

Precedent/Purpose

Ritual re-creation of cosmos:

    Evocation of gatekeeper

    Establishing the sacred center w/3 gates

    Opening the Gates

Beneficial influences:

    Apollo as Bardic Deity

    Silvanus as Protector against negative forces

    Vesta as hearth fire – lighting the sacrificial fire

    Invocations to the Three Kindred

    The Story of Saturn

    Main sacrifice

    Praise offerings

    Piacular offering

    Omen of Return

    Consecration and receiving of waters of life

    Unwinding, thanking all invoked

    Closing the Gates

    IO SATURNALIA!

### Latin phrases:

*Fiat* – “so be it”

*Macte virtute est esto* – “well done”

*Quirites* – folk/people

### Roman deities:

Ianus – gatekeeper

Ops Mater– earth mother/goddess of bounty

Silvanus – god associated with the wilds

Saturn – ancient deity of Rome, probably predating the founding of Rome itself

Vesta – goddess of the hearth

### Roman cosmology & symbols:

Fire/well/tree = focus/mundus/portus

Primary focus of religion/everything else is COMMUNITY (as opposed to land/agriculture)

## **Musical Signal**

Celebrants gather out in the garage, and Jenni rings a bell to get things started.

### **Honoring the Earth-Mother (Judi)**

Ops Mater. Goddess of the bounty of the earth,  
We send out words in praise of you, from whom all worlds flow.  
Mystery of mysteries, this continual creation,  
like a fountain forever bubbling up from the Earth's darkness  
She is a cup that is never empty.  
Generous One, eternally giving gifts,  
We pray to you; we praise you.

### **All: Ops Mater, we praise you.**

[As celebrants pass outside from the garage to the house, they may sprinkle a pinch of dried flowers or kneel and touch the Earth.]

### **The Processional/Sigil Marking / Purification(s) of Participants**

Celebrants process from the garage to the house, singing a Saturnalia-ized version of "O, Come, All Ye Faithful." As they enter the house, they are offered a bowl with scented water and a towel to wash their hands. As they enter the house through the back door, they pass through incense and each is given a candle, lit from the hostess's hearth fire (Jenni).

#### **Oh Come, All Ye Druids**

Oh come, all ye druids,  
Gather at the center.  
Oh come ye, oh come ye  
To worship the Gods.  
Sing Praise to Saturn,  
God of Romans' Golden Age.

Oh come let us unbind him  
Oh come let us unbind him  
Oh come let us unbind him  
Saturn the King.

(repeat until all have gathered)

Final Verse:

Adeste Quirites  
Laeti triumphantes,  
    Venite, venite  
ad sanctum centrum.  
    Satorem cantante  
Rex aura aetatis

Venite inligemus  
Venite inligemus  
Venite inligemus  
Rex Saturnus

## **Evoking the Bardic Deity (Jenni)**

[Jenni pours an offering of wine for Apollo.]

Phoebus Apollo, bringer of light, son of  
Zeus, the almighty, and Leto, the rich-haired, who  
Bore him at Delos, where all manner of men now  
Come bearing gifts, fine and fragrant for thee.

Sweet-tongued Apollo, who sings for the Gods, may you  
Guide thence our praises to bathe them in honor;  
For we are but mortals, and thou art a God;  
Only this boon we beg thee, grant to us now:

That our voices be pleasing to Gods, Spirits, and Manes;  
That the aim of our rite strike its target precisely;  
That our blessings and theirs pass freely between  
The realms of the Kindreds and the lips of our Seer.

**All: MACTE VIRTUTE ESTO!**

## **CENTERING, GROUNDING, & MERGING (JENNI)**

Take a moment to find the center of your mind, body and soul. Let us begin to open our minds to Magic, to the presence of the Gods. Begin with your body. Plant your feet firmly on the ground, balanced and upright. Shake out your arms and shoulders. Let gravity pull you evenly toward the Earth, as you release the everyday tensions in your flesh.

Now, begin to breathe deeply and regularly. With each inbreath fill your lungs slowly and completely. With each outbreath empty them entirely. For a moment, simply watch your breath. In and out . . . Slowly . . . Completely.

Now, as you continue to breathe deeply and regularly, imagine, feel that roots are springing from the soles of your feet, reaching down into soil and stone, down to the World below you. A strong taproot slides down, going deeper and growing stronger, down to touch the cool, dark waters beneath the Earth. The dark, cool, magnetic powers of the land.

Breathe deep, and with each inbreath draw the Earth Power up through your roots. Feel it flowing into your feet, tingling and energizing. Rising up from the Earth . . . into your legs . . . rising up through your legs . . . feel it pool in your groin. Breathe deep, and draw the Earth Power up your spine . . . rising through your belly . . . rising through your heart . . . rising up to pool in your head . . . Filling and energizing you . . . rising still to fountain out the crown of your

head and flow back to the Earth. Flowing back out through your head and hands, to return to the Earth.

So are you now filled with the Power of the Earth.

Now imagine, feel, that from far overhead, from deep within the turning Wheel of the Sky, a single ray of light shines down, out and down to bathe your body and your spirit in the warm, electric Sky power. Shining down over your head . . . over your heart . . . over your loins . . . touching and warming the Earth Power.

Everywhere the light touches becomes bright, shining like the sun on the water. Now, raise your shining hands to the Sky and let the Earth Power flow into your hands. Feel . . . see . . . your hands brighten and energize with the combined Powers of the Earth and the Sky.

So are you now the Sacred Pillar, the World Tree, the vertical axis of all the Worlds.

Now, reach out to those beside you. Join your shining hands together. Let the Waters and the Light merge and flow through us all . . . the Power flowing upward from below . . . the power flowing downward from above . . . through each and all of us . . . making us one light, one depth, one united and Sacred Grove.

At one with the cosmos and at one as a grove – we are, as a community, greater than the sum of our parts. We stand as a grove in a forest of trees, one folk.

The waters support and surround us

The land extends about us

The sky stretches out above us.

At the center burns a living flame.

May all the Kindred bless us.

May our worship be true.

May our actions be just.

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

**All: FIAT! So be it.**

### **Specification of Ritual Purpose & Historical Precedent / Naming Deity of the Occasion**

Saturnalia is the Roman festival of the god, Saturn. It was traditionally celebrated on the 17th of December, the date that Saturn's temple in the Forum Romanum was dedicated. While the actual ritual took place only on the 17th, the holiday was traditionally celebrated with feasting and merriment for an additional three to seven days.

Perhaps the most well known of the Roman religious holidays, Saturnalia was certainly one of the most popular. Catullus, referred to it as the "optimus dierum" (the best of days).

Saturn's temple contained a statue of Saturn, filled with oil and with its feet bound by woolen bands, which were removed for the festival. A great sacrifice was held at the altar outside Temple, followed by a public feast open to everyone. The sacrifice, like most public rituals, was a formal affair, though unlike most rites, sacrifices were made with heads uncovered, "from a conviction that no ill-omened sight would interrupt the rites of such a happy day" (Ramsay).

The banquets following the main sacrifice, however, set the tone for the remainder of Saturnalia, with parties, celebrations in the streets, and merry making. All courts, shops and schools were closed; it was an impious time to start a war or punish a criminal. Folks wore paraded around

the city wearing the soft woolen cap (pileus), a recognized as badge of freedmen, exchanging presents with friends and shouting "Io Saturnalia!"

In the home, a festive air reigned. A recurrent theme of Saturnalia celebrations involves a reversal of roles and an upset in the normal routine of things: servants, released from their usual toils, were served before their masters (sometimes wearing their masters' clothing) and they were granted full freedom of speech; gambling was allowed in public -- chaos presided over order for a day.

Gifts were exchanged: beeswax candles to friends, and small pottery dolls for the children. Gifts might also include food items or small amounts of money. Small silver objects were typical, although it was considered extremely poor taste to offer valuable gifts to someone poorer who could not reciprocate in kind.

This brief episode of social egalitarianism was a remembrance of the mythic Golden Age of Saturn, when all men were equal.

### **Establishing the Sacred Center**

Congregation sings "Deck the Halls" holly branches are added to adorn the focus, the mundus and the portus.

#### **Deck the Halls**

(Fill in the fa-la-la's)

Deck the halls with boughs of holly  
'Tis the season to be jolly  
Don we now our gay apparel  
Troll the ancient Yule-tide carol

See the blazing Yule before us.  
Strike the harp and join the chorus.  
Follow me in merry measure.  
While I tell of Yule-tide treasure.

Fast away the old year passes.  
Hail the New Year, lads and lasses  
Sing we joyous, all together.  
Heedless of the wind and weather.

### **Evoking the Gate Keeper**

[Jenni makes an offering of a hinge]

Salve Ianus Pater!  
Ianus Inceptio, God of beginnings;  
Ianus Brifons, Two-faced Ianus;  
Ianus Patulcius, Opener of doors;  
Ianus Domesticus, Protector of homes;  
Ianus Quirinus; God of the folk  
Lend wings to our prayers and conjure a portal between us and the world of the Gods.

Through your door, let the prayers of your supplicants pass to the Kindreds.

### **Opening the Gates.**

[Jenni conjures the Gates, saying:]

Now, Janus  
Join your magic with mine

And let the fire open as a gate,  
Let the mundus open as a gate,  
Let the doorway be the crossroads of all Worlds.

Ianus of Openings, admit us into the presence of the shining Ones  
IANUS PATULCIUS ADMITTE NOS IN PRAESENTIU NUMINIUM LUCENTIUM

PORTAE DICUDANTUR – Let the gates be open!

**All: LET THE GATES BE OPEN!**

### **Acknowledgement of the Outsiders**

[An offering of wine, Tire Bite Ale, White Castles & a golden apple is made.]

Mars Silvanus Pater,  
te precor uti sies volens propitius mihi domo familiaque nostrae,  
quous re ergo hoc sacrificium offero.

Father Mars Silvanus,  
I pray you be of good will and favorable to me and to our house and household,  
for which purpose I make this offering

Let the wine flow freely and the sliders go down easy. Party on, dude!

Likewise we acknowledge within ourselves  
All those things that would cause disunity

We contemplate these ills and enemies  
And for this sacred time  
We set them aside!

**All: FIAT. So be it.**

### **Lighting the Sacrificial Fire (Jenni)**

[Jenni lights a candle from the focus.]

Shining Lady, unite us all,

for by worshipping at a common hearth  
we are made one family, one people.  
Queen of the hearth, Vesta Mater, your household is here.  
Let us pray with a good fire.

**All: FIAT! So be it.**

### **Ancestors**

[An offering of Dead Guy Ale, jerky and 3 apples is made.]

The children of the Earth call out to the Mighty Dead.  
Salvete, Majores et Di Manes!  
Greetings, ancestors and divine dead.

To all those whose bones lie in this land,  
Whose hearts are tied to it,  
Whose memory holds it;  
Ancient tribes of this place,  
We offer you welcome.

To all of our grandmothers and grandfathers,  
Our own beloved dead,  
Blood-kin and heart-kin,  
Ancient tribes of our blood,  
We offer you welcome.

To all those elder wise ones who guide their people,  
Poets and seers,  
Judges and magicians;  
Wise women and men of ancient days,  
We offer you welcome.

So, O Mighty Ones  
We call to you as our kin,  
In the love of the All-Mother,  
To join in our magic.

Come to our fire, Spirits  
Meet us at the boundary  
Guide us and ward us as we walk the elder ways.

Majories et Di Manes, mactete hoc sacrificio!

**All: Ancestors, accept our sacrifice!**

## **Nature Spirits (Judi)**

[An offering of bird seed and cat food is made.]

The children of the Earth call out to the Spirits of this Land.  
Salvete, Numinae et Indigites!

To all our allies,  
Kindred of stone and stream,  
Crystal and fertile soil,  
Pools and every water;  
Earth-kins,  
We offer you welcome

To all our allies,  
Kindred of the growing green,  
Herb and flower,  
Shrub and mighty trees,  
Root and stem and fruit.  
Green-kins,  
We offer you welcome.

To all our allies,  
Kindred of fur and feather and scale  
All who walk or fly or swim or crawl  
Animal-kins,  
We offer you welcome.

So, O Noble Ones  
We call to you as our allies,  
In the joy of life upon earth,  
To join in our magic.

Come to our fire, Spirits;  
Meet us at the boundary.  
Guide and ward us as we walk the elder ways.

Numinae, mactete hoc sacrificio!

**All: Nature Spirits, accept our sacrifice!**

## **Deities**

[An offering of wine and incense is made.]

The children of the Earth call out to the Shining Ones.

Salvete, Dei!

To all the Shining Ones,  
First children of the Mother,  
Wisest and mightiest,  
Loving and comforting;  
Gods and Goddesses,  
We offer you welcome.

To the Goddesses and Gods of this place,  
Ancient and powerful,  
Known to us or unknown;  
Gods of this place,  
We offer you welcome.

To all the deities of those here gathered,  
You whom we worship,  
You who bless our lives;  
O patrons and matrons,  
We offer you welcome.

So, O Shining Ones,  
We call to you as our elders,  
In reverence and love,  
To join in our magic.

Come to our fire, Shining Ones;  
Meet us at the boundary.  
Guide and ward us as we walk the elder ways.

Dei, mactete hoc sacrificio!

**All: Deities, accept our sacrifice!**

### **Descriptive Invocation of Deity of the Occasion**

The story of Saturn is older than Rome itself. Saturn reigned during the Golden Age of Latium, when all people were equal – there was no class distinction and there were no slaves. Everyone prospered and no one – even kings – set themselves above others. It was a time when the villages of Latium welcomed among them all who wanted to make their homes and share in the communities' toil and bounty.

Tradition has it that Saturn, known as Kronos, King of Gods in Greece, was given an oracle that he would be defeated by his own son: In fear, the god devoured his offspring as fast as they were born, and he kept them sunk in his bowels.

Many a time did Saturn's wife, Rhea, grumble, to be so often big with child, yet never to be a mother; she repined at her own fruitfulness. And so when Jove was born she concealed a stone in a garment, which, Saturn, thinking it was the babe, swallowed. So had fate decreed that the sire should be beguiled.

The fate of Saturn's children is a story best told another day. Suffice it to say that the oracle was true, and defeated, Saturn fled Greece, driven from the celestial realm by his son, Jupiter, who, along with his siblings, reigned in their father's place. And so to Latium during the reign of Janus "in a ship came the sickle-bearing god to the Tuscan river after wandering over the world." (*Fasti*) Just as Latium opened its arms wide to refugees of all kinds, Saturn was welcomed in Italy.

When Saturn arrived by ship, Janus received him as a guest. He learned from Saturn the art of husbandry, thereby improving his people's lives, whose methods of farming before then had been brutish and rude. Saturn is credited with the invention of the art of grafting, with the cultivation of fruit trees, and with instructing men in everything that belongs to the fertilizing of the fields.

Janus and Saturn reigned together in harmony for many a year and built two neighboring towns, which some say were on two of the Seven Hills of Rome. Their reign is said to have been a time of great happiness, both on account of the universal plenty that then prevailed and because as yet there was no division into bond and free.

It was during their reign that Saturn suddenly disappeared, and Janus then devised means to add to his honors. First he gave the name Saturnia to the land ruled by Saturn. He then built an altar, instituting rites as to a god and calling these rites the Saturnalia – a fact which goes to show how very much older the festival is than the city of Rome. It was because Saturn had improved the conditions of life that, by order of Janus, religious honors have been paid to him since before the birth of Rome itself. A pious posterity inscribed a ship on coinage to commemorate the coming of the stranger god to Rome, the other side depicting the two-faced Janus.

The statue of Saturn was filled with oil and was bound with woolen bonds, which were untied for the feast day of Saturnalia. Those who have associated Saturn with sowing have attributed this unbinding as symbolic of the seed bursting forth in the tenth month (both with respect to the calendar -- December being the tenth month -- and to pregnancy).

Let the youngest here among us unbind of Saturn's feet and so hearken back to the Golden Age of Rome!

[The youngest comes forward to unwrap the bindings around Saturn's feet.]

### **The main sacrifice**

[Jenni washes her hands first]

Jenni sacrifices to Saturn: the first is gold; the second is wine. As she speaks the words in Latin, Mike echoes them in English.

*Saturnus Pater,*

Father Saturn,

*te hoc aurum ommovendo bonas preces,*

With good prayers I offer to you this gold.

*precor uti sies volens propitious illis Quiritibus te laudatis,*

May it be your will to look with favor upon these folk who have honored you,

*quoius re ergo hoc sacrificium offero.*

for which purpose I make this offering.

*Saturnus Pater,*

Father Saturn,

*Uti te aurum ommovendo bonas preces bene precatus sum,*

As with good prayers I offered you gold, that you might favor those who have honored you.

*Eiusdem rei ergo macte vino inferior esto.*

So, too may you be blessed by this offering of wine.

**All: FIAT. So be it.**

### **Praise Offerings, Dance, Libations, etc.**

[any additional praise offerings from the congregation]

### **Piacular Offering (Jenni)**

[Jenni makes a final offering of wine and incense.]

Saturnus Pater,

Gods and Goddesses,

Holy Ancestors,

Spirits of this place:

If anything that we have done here has offended you,

If anything we have done here has been incomplete,

If anything we have done here has not been in the proper manner,  
accept this final offering in recompense.

### **Seeking the Omen of Return**

So we have given of our love and our wealth

To the Powers, that they may know our devotion.

Now let our voices arise on the Fire

Let our voices sound in the Mundus

Let our words pass the boundary to the Otherworld.

Having sacrificed to the Powers

May we open to them

Asking what blessings they offer us in return

And the needs they have of us.

Have the sacrifices been accepted?

Jenni flips a Roman coin [Vespasian on one side; Fortuna on the other – guess which one is favorable. ☺] If the omen is such that this question is answered in the negative, we go back and do another piacular offering, then start this part over.

## **Induction of Receptivity**

Ancient and Mighty Ones we have honored you  
We pray you honor us in turn  
For a gift calls for a gift  
Hear your children:  
NUMINA LUCENTIA, AQUAE VIVAE DATIS!  
**All: Shining Ones, give us the Waters!**

## **Consecration Agreement**

We draw blessing from the Amphora of Blessing  
We pour the Wine of Inspiration  
Behold the holy Cup of Magic  
The outpouring of Blessing from the Great Ones  
When we share the draught of the Gods  
We drink in wisdom, love and strength  
To do as we will in the worlds  
In service to the Shining Ones.

Hear us Father Saturn:  
Hallow these waters!

ECCE AQUAE VIVAE!

**All: Behold the Waters of Life!**

As the cup(s) are passed around, participants sing:

**Pour the Waters (or perhaps just a musical interlude, if we don't think of anything better for music while we share the waters)**

Pour the waters, raise the cup.  
Drink your share of wisdom deep.  
Strength and joy now fill us up.  
As the elder ways we keep.

(Repeat until all have shared the waters)

## **Thanking of Entities Invited in Reverse Order**

The Great Ones have blessed us.  
With joy in our hearts,  
Let us carry the magic from our sacred Grove  
Into our lives and our work.  
Each time we offer to the Powers  
They become stronger  
And more aware of our needs and our worship.  
So now as we prepare to depart

Let us give thanks  
To all those who have aided us.

PATER SATURN, GRATIAS TIBI AGAMUS! Father Saturn...

All: We thank you!

DEI GRATIAS VOBIS AGAMUS! O Gods and Goddesses of elder days...

All: We thank you!

NUMINAE ET INDIGITES, GRATIAS VOBIS AGAMUS! O Spirits of this land...

All: We thank you!

MAJORES ET DI MANES, GRATIAS VOBIS AGAMUS! O Ancestors, our Kindred...

All: We thank you!

GRATIAS VOBIS AGAMUS! To all those Powers that have aided us, we say again...

All: We thank you!

Mother of all  
To you we return all we leave unused  
Uphold us now in the world as you have in our rite.  
Mater Ops, GRATIAS TIBI AGAMUS!

All: We thank you!

Ianus Clusivius, closer of doors,  
For your presence and power  
Your guiding and guarding we say...  
GRATIAS TIBI AGAMUS!

All: We thank you!

### **Final offering to Vesta:**

(Jenni makes a final offering of incense to the sacrificial fire and extinguishes it.)

Vesta Mater, Queen of the hearth,  
who by rights receives the last,  
bless and guard all those who worship you  
whether in their home or without  
whether alone or with others  
whether thinking of you or engaged in business.  
Lady of Fire, receive this offering.

### **Affirmation of Past/Future Continuity and Success**

Now by the Keeper of Gates and by our magic  
We end what we began.

Now let the Focus be flame;  
Let the Mundus be an urn;  
Let the Portal be only a doorway.

Let all be as it was before  
PORTAE CLAUDENTUR

All: Let the Gates be closed!

Go now, Quirites  
In peace and blessings  
The rite is ended!

**ALL: IO SATURNALIA!!**