

# Saturnalia Ritual

## I. MUSICAL SIGNAL

Celebrants gather outside the ritual area, and **Anne rings a bell** to get things started.

## II. CERES INVOCATION<sup>1</sup>

**[An offering of lavender is made to Ceres.]**

O, flaxen haired Ceres, Mother of Abundance,

You enliven the grain and loosen the soil

Giving room for our produce to stretch forth and grow;

Ceres Benefactress,

You lavish our tables with everything good.

Your bounty we acknowledge and return to Your breast

This fragrant offering, by which Your reward we seal.

May Your gentle touch sustain us.

Ceres, macte hoc sacrificio!

**All: Ceres, our sacrifice!**

## III. PROCESSIONAL & PURIFICATION

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.**

### 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.*

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

*Venite inligemus  
Venite inligemus  
Venite inligemus  
Rex Saturnus*

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Ovid, *Amores*, III 10 3-14; 43-8

*(repeat until all have gathered)*

#### **IV. APOLLO INVOCATION**

**[An offering of wine is poured for Apollo.]**

Phoebus Apollo, bringer of morn, son of  
Zeus, the almighty, and Leto, the fair, who  
Bore him at Delos, where nowl many a men  
Comes 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.

**MACTE VIRTUTE ESTO!**

**All: MACTE VIRTUTE ESTO! (or "Well done")**

#### **V. GROUNDING & GROUPMIND**

Take a moment to find the center of your mind, body and soul.

Take a few deep, cleansing breaths. As you breathe, begin to slow your busy thoughts.

Breathe deeply from your belly, feel your feet resting firmly upon the Earth. Feel Her pulse through the soles of your feet. Curl your toes into the ground, as you feel them stretch into the bosom of the warm, nurturing Earth in search of the primal waters within. Feel those waters pooling in your legs... in your loins... up through your spine... filling your heart... and into your head, filling and warming... finally cascading out the crown of your head to flow back to the Earth.

So are you now filled with the Power of Earth.

Turn your attention skyward. Continuing to breathe, notice far overhead, deep in the turning wheel of the Sky, a single ray of light that shines upon you, bathing your body and spirit with the warm, electric Sky Power. Shining down over your head... into your heart... down your spine... through your loins and into your legs.

So are you now filled with the Power of Sky.

Everywhere the light touches, it mixes and pools with the Earth Power... becoming bright and shining, like the sun sparkling on water. Raise your shining hands to the Sky and feel them brighten and energize with the combined Powers of Earth and Sky.

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

Now reach out to those near you. Join your shining hands together, letting the Waters and the Light merge and flow through us all... Earth Power flowing upward from below... Sky Power flowing down from above... through each and all of us, making us one light, one depth, one united and sacred Grove, greater than the sum of its parts.

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.

May our love be pure.

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

**All: Fiat! ... or... SO BE IT! (if you prefer)**

## **VI. PURPOSE & PRECEDENT**

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. Although the actual ritual took place on the 17th, the holiday was traditionally celebrated with feasting and merriment for another 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, its feet bound by woolen bonds, which were removed only for the time of the festival. A great sacrifice was held at the altar outside His temple, followed by a public feast that was open to everyone – citizens, freedmen, slaves, women and foreigners alike. The sacrifice, like most public rituals, was a formal affair, though for Saturnalia, unlike most Roman rites, heads were not covered, perhaps from an assumption that no ill omen could possibly impose on such a joyous occasion.

The banquets following the main sacrifice set the tone for the remainder of Saturnalia, with parties, celebrations in the streets, and all kinds of merry making. All courts, shops and schools were closed; it was an impious time to start a war or punish a criminal. Folks paraded around the city wearing the PILEUS, a soft woolen cap recognized as badge of freedmen, as they exchanged presents with friends and shouted "Io Saturnalia!"

In most homes, 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 they even wore their masters' clothing!) and they were permitted full freedom of speech; even gambling was allowed in public. In short, Chaos presided over Order for a day.

This brief episode of social egalitarianism was a remembrance of the mythic Golden Age of Saturn, when all men were equal, the world was at peace, and everyone prospered.

## VII. THE SACRED CENTER

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

**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.*

*AQUAFOLIA ORNATIS,*

*TEMPUS HOC HILARITATIS,*

*VESTES CLARAS INDUAMUS,*

*CANTILENAS NUNC PROMAMUS,*

## VIII. OPENING THE GATES

**IANUS INVOCATION**

**[An offering of olive oil and a hinge is made.]**

Salve Ianus Pater!

Ianus Inceptio, God of Beginnings;

Ianus Brifons, Two-faced God;

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 Kindred.

Ianus Pater, macte hoc sacrificio!

**All: Father Ianus, accept our offering!**

## **OPENING THE GATES.**

Now, Janus, join Your magic with mine

And let the focus open as a gate,

Let the mundus open as a gate,

Let the porta be the crossroads of all Worlds.

IANUS PATULCIUS ADMITTE NOS IN PRAESENTIU NUMINIUM LUCENTIUM

PORTAE APERIANTUR – Let the gates be open!

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

## **IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE OUTSIDERS**

**[Jenni makes an offering of wine to Mars Silvanus]**

Mars Silvanus Pater,

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

May you keep the forces of disunity at bay during the course of our rite.

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

Quirites, as we now prepare to treat with the Outdwellers,  
Look to the Outdwellers in your own hearts -- all that which causes disunity  
And for this sacred time, set them aside!

**[Jenni makes an offering of Tire Bite Ale, White Castles & a golden apple to the Outdwellers]**

Ancient Spirits, dark or light,	We now establish here
You who care not for our way,	Sacred ground where You can stay.
Outdwellers! We know Your might -	Take this bottle of frothy beer -
Your forbearance we'll repay!	We ask You to keep away!

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

## **X. KINDRED INVOCATIONS**

### **LIGHTING THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE <sup>2</sup> - ANNE**

**[Anne lights the focus from the hearth.]**

Shining Lady, unite us all,  
For by worshipping at a common hearth  
We are made one family, one people.  
Vesta, Queen of the hearth, Your household is here.  
Let us pray with a good fire.

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

### **ANCESTORS - JUDI**

**[An offering of Dead Guy Ale and jerky is made.]**

Ancestors, you Mighty Ones,  
Witness now our humble actions.  
Kin of heart and Kin of blood,  
Ancient Ones, we call You Sacred!

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<sup>2</sup> Based on prayer by Ceisiwr Serith

Come unto us now, we pray,  
Join us at the Well this day!  
Ancestors, accept our sacrifice!

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

## **NATURE SPIRITS – ANNE**

All You Spirits of the Land  
Be You small or be You grand,  
Fin and feather, fur and skin,  
Right intent is welcomed in!  
Leaf and stone and fairy, too,  
Let our Sacred Pact renew!  
Land-spirits, accept our sacrifice!

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

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

## **DEITIES - CARMEN**

**[An offering of wine and incense is made.]**

Shining Ones, O Great and Timeless,  
Gods and Goddesses, come to us!  
You are welcome by our fire,  
Let us know what You desire.  
Known and unknown Deities  
Meet us at the Boundaries!  
Shining Ones, accept our sacrifice!

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

## **XI. MAIN SACRIFICE**

### **STORY OF SATURN**

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 Titan devoured each of his offspring as fast as they were born, swallowing them whole. He thought he would keep them sunk in his bowels forever and so avert the oracle.

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 another child, 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 children, who then reigned in their father's place.

And so to Latium, during the reign of Janus, came Saturn, "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 to Rome.

When Saturn arrived by ship in Italy, Janus received him as a host receives a guest. Saturn repaid the hospitality by teaching Janus and the Romans the art of husbandry, the grafting and cultivation of fruit trees and grapevines, and the fertilizing of the fields. His agricultural innovations significantly improved the lives of the Romans, whose methods of farming had been crude and ineffective.

Janus and Saturn reigned together in harmony for many a year, and they 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 prosperity and contentment, on account of the universal plenty that then prevailed and because there was as yet no division into freedman and citizen.

And then there came a day when Saturn suddenly disappeared, and Janus devised a means to add to Saturn's 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* --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 Saturn since before the birth of Rome itself. Janus, in pious homage, had a coin struck, which on one side was inscribed a ship commemorating the coming of the stranger god to Rome, and on the other side, the two-faced Janus.

The statue of Saturn was filled with oil and was bound with woolen bonds, which were untied for the duration of the festival of Saturnalia. Some, who associate Saturn's name etymologically with sowing, have attributed this unbinding as symbolic of the seed bursting forth in the tenth month. In the Roman calendar, December was the tenth month, but there are also ten months in a normal pregnancy.

Let the youngest here among us unbind 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.]**

## PRAYER OF SACRIFICE

Saturnus, Great King of the ancient, starry Skies and Earth primieval, under Your peaceful reign never was anyone's tranquility disturbed by labor.<sup>3</sup>

### [Jenni washes her hands first]

Jenni sacrifices to Saturn: the first is gold; the second is wine. As she speaks the words in Latin<sup>4</sup>, a helper echoes them in English.

### [Jenni makes an offering of gold]

*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.]

### [Jenni makes an offering of wine]

*Saturnus Pater,*

Father Saturn,

*Uti te aurum ommovendo bonas preces bene precatu 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]

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<sup>3</sup> Martial, *Epigram* 12.62

<sup>4</sup> Based in part on Cato's *De Agricultura* 134

## PIACULAR OFFERING<sup>5</sup>

[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.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on prayer by Ceisiwr Serith

## XII. THE OMEN OF RETURN

So we have given of our love and our wealth to the Kindred,

That they may know our devotion.

Now let our voices arise on the Focus

Let our voices sound in the Mundus

Let our words traverse the Porta.

May we open to the Kindred

Asking if our sacrifices been accepted.

**[coin toss]**

### 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!**

NUMINA LUCENTIA, AQUAE VIVAE DATIS!

**All: Shining Ones, give us the Waters!**

NUMINA LUCENTIA, AQUAE VIVAE DATIS!

**All: Shining Ones, give us the Waters!**

ECCE AQUAE VIVAE!

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

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

*Gods rest ye merry Quirites*

*Let none of you dismay;*

*Remember that Saturnus is*

*Unbound not every day.*

*For these few days a Titan*

*Harkens back the Golden Age.*

*Oh tidings of fortune and cheer, fortune and cheer.*

*Oh tidings of fortune and cheer!*

(Repeat until all have shared the waters)

### **XIII. CLOSING**

We have drunk of the Waters of Life!

The Powers have given us true and wondrous blessings

We affirm the gifts of our Kindreds and acknowledge their power in our lives.

Quirites, do you accept the gifts of the Kindreds?

#### **All: We do!**

So now as we prepare to depart

Let us give thanks

To all those who have aided us.

PATER SATURNUS, 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!**

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

#### **All: We thank You!**

Ceres Mater,

To You we return all we leave unused

Uphold us now in the world as You have in our rite.

CERES, 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<sup>6</sup> - ANNE

[Anne 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 homes or without  
whether alone or with others  
whether thinking of You or engaged in business.  
Lady of Fire, receive this offering.

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

### CLOSING THE GATES

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 Porta 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!!**

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<sup>6</sup> Based on prayer by Ceisiwr Serith