

Panthea, Initiations and Festivals of the Goddess **by Olivia Robertson**

2. Flamma Vestae **Initiation into a Fellowship of Isis Iseum**

Oracle of the Goddess Vesta

Priestess: Come to us, Holy Light, Divine Spirit. Who are Vesta of the Everlasting Flame! Without Thee we are lifeless, devoid of true being. We exist in a transient world of appearances, entrapped in delusions. When we struggle to free ourselves, we are dragged away from reality by the nightmares of our fellow sufferers. Free us with fire from heaven!

Oracle: All those who pray for the Divine Light are answered, even if no Light is bestowed. For the weary soul, lost in a world of phantoms, can be driven insane by too much Light, too soon! All your work, your struggles, all your quests for goodness, however, form a foundation on which my Eternal Flame may safely burn. Know that your body is the Phoenix and it is My Fire which consumes the Sun Bird, burning upon My Altar! From this alchemy of transmutation, the Phoenix rises in glory from its ashes: so shall it be in the fullness of time with all who are born of the Mother God!

The little flame that you bring forth with you from your Mother's womb is with you always, however dimly it burns. The only spiritual death is when that flame is wilfully put out. But even then through Divine Grace the flame may be reignited, when the soul is penitent and is ready. It is greed and cruelty, selfishness and contempt for others that stifle My flame. To live without it is impossible. For many years the soul may struggle on, becoming increasingly mechanical, trying to preserve its individual consciousness. Without the Vital Spark the body itself succumbs to diseases and perishes prematurely. Then the self finds itself in a limbo, neither in the Sphere of Spirits nor on earth. In such a plight the loving help of others is needed: many spiritual rescue workers bring light and warmth from My hearth.

Truly, when you give generously to your fellow humans, animals, all Earth's creatures, you suffer no loss, but rather increase! A candle flame is not lessened when light is taken from it to light many other candles. There is more, not less light. Yet all the candle-flames come from the same source. So is it with My Vestal Flame, which gives forth the white Light of Truth and the golden Fire of Love to all. And yet honour the darkness, for it is from the matrix of night that day cometh forth.

All spiritual and physical fires, whether animating the atom, the earth, the sun or the galaxies, emanate from My Eternal Flame. This is beyond both time and space. My Light is expressed individually through each creature, every atom: yet all are One in me. Share your light and Love with all - and you will gain all.

On a white-draped altar let there be 7 white candles, vessel of water, incense, an ankh pendant and long red cord by an unlighted candle. An open fire or glowing charcoal in brazier is in temple. Priestess of Vesta in gold headdress and white gown stands by fire. Priestess of the tutelary goddess of the Iseum is seated by altar, her face hidden by long veil. By her stands the Priest. Before them stand Priestess of Isis and Priest of Osiris in Egyptian headdresses and robes. Before altar are: Priestess of Maat and Priest of Tehuti, each holding feather, in Egyptian robes and Priestess of Astraea in classical headdress and robes. Companions wear purple robes. On a table are: wine, fruit-juice, a glass of water, a loaf of bread, and a loving cup or glasses.

By the door stands Priest of Anubis in black and gold wearing sigil of the jackal. Candidate waits outside door and

wears white with white veil (woman) or hood (man). Companion holds Candidates' gift of incense, flowers and work of art. The guide, Priest of Hermes, is in classical robe and bears caduceus wand.

The Admission

Guide instructs candidate to knock an temple door 3 times.

Pr. of Tehuti: Honoured Guardian of our Temple, Priest of Anubis, who seeks admission to the Holy Place?

Priest of Anubis leaves temple, speaks with guide and returns.

Priest of Anubis: Noble Priesthood and Companions of the Iseum of ***, the Psychopompos, Priest of Hermes, conducts a candidate hither. She/he is a member of Aset Shemsu, the Fellowship of Isis. She/He seeks membership of our Iseum of ***.

Priest: Who stands Sponsor for this Candidate?

Sponsor/s speak in favour.

Priest of Tehuti: Who would refuse this candidate membership?

Companions speak - if any wish to.

Priest of Tehuti: Let us confer.

Decision is made.

Pr. Tehuti: The Candidate is to be admitted!

Priest of Anubis admits Can. and Guide.

Facing the Assessors

Guide: The candidate must now face the Three Assessors. (*Leads candidate before priesthood of Maat, Tehuti and Astraea.*)

Priestess: Harken to the words of the Goddess Maat. "I am the Goddess of Truth. I hold this my feather before my soul. Each frond responds at once to the breath of the Spirit. Dare you face Truth with honesty, whether it be the soul-shaking winds of new ideas, the ugliness of wrong-doing of yourself and others, and the shock of harsh facts?"

Candidate replies.

Priestess of Maat: Though the mask of Truth may be feared as terrible, when She is faced with courage and faith, perfect beauty and goodness are seen!

Pr. of Tehuti: Heed the words of the God Tehuti. "I am the God of Wisdom. I show the soul my feather, that protects the sacred Ibis from the cold winds, and balances it in flight." Do you balance Truth with Compassion: Love with understanding?

Candidate replies.

Pr. Tehuti: Those who love, forgive others: those who face the truth are just: those with wisdom forgive themselves!

Priestess: Harken to the words of the Goddess Astraea. "I am the Goddess of Justice who fled this world because of the wicked deeds of men. Now I return at the end of this age!" Are you just to those you dislike? Do you understand the point of view of those with whom you disagree? Are you just to all creatures, human, animal, plant?

Candidate replies.

Prs: Learn to recognise the good qualities in every being, including yourself, and you acknowledge that which is real and eternal! Be irritated by others' short-comings - and you waste time being angry with fleeting shadows. Be true to your real self!

Pr. Tehuti: Has any companion a question to put to the Candidate, before acceptance into our group? (*If so, Coms do so and Can replies.*)

The Acceptance

Pr. of Iseum Deity: (*to Candidate*) Do you in mind and heart adore Deity? Do you love Isis-Aset, Vesta of our Hearth and our own beloved Goddess (*Goddess and God*) of this holy Temple and Iseum?

Candidate: I do.

Pr. of Iseum: May our members signify acceptance of this candidate.

Coms: (*in turn*) I accept this Candidate as a member of our Iseum.

Pr. of Iseum: (*to Candidate*) Which Goddess Name (*woman*) God Name (*man*) do you choose, in token of your soul's birth through the Goddess?

Can: To the name/ s given by my parents, I add the Divine name of ***.

Pr. of Iseum: in the Holy Name of (*chosen name*) I declare you a member of our Shemsu, the Iseum of ***.

The Offering

Can: I offer incense to the Goddess Vesta! (*sprinkles incense on fire*) I offer flowers to the Goddess Isis and the God Osiris! (*presents flowers*) I offer this work made by myself (*art, writing, craftwork etc.*) for this Temple of *** (*presents her/his work*).

Priest of Iseum: I accept these gifts for the Temple, in the Name of Vesta, Isis and Osiris and ***.

Bestowal of Spiritual Gifts

Music: Scriabin, Mahler, Ravel are suitable. Priesthood who hide veiled Priestess of centre stand aside, so she is seen for the first time by Candidate.

Pr. of Iseum: O Vesta, grant us Thy favour! In Thy service I open my lips. I was rapt in prayer; I felt the heavenly Deity, and the glad ground gleamed with a purple light. My ignorance was enlightened and my errors corrected without the help of an earthly instructor. Vesta is the same as the Earth; under both of them is a perpetual fire; the earth and the hearth are symbols of the home. The earth is like a ball resting

on no prop. Its own power of rotation keeps its orb balanced. What wonder then if a Virgin like unto the earth delights in a Virgin Minister, and allows only chaste hands to touch her sacred things! Conceive of Vesta as a living flame. An undying fire is hidden in Her Temple with its curved dome. Vesta is so called as standing by power. The Hearth, her Focus, is named after her flames.

Prs: (*gives Candidate taper*) Light this candle from the hearth of Vesta. Share your power and your gifts with others and you will suffer no diminution, but rather add to your store of knowledge, power and happiness!

Candidate lights candle. Priestess of Vesta lays hands over Candidate's head and heart. Warm power may be felt and flame coloured lights seen.

Priestess of Vesta: May Vesta's light brighten your mind and Her Flame warm your heart.

Pr. of Osiris: Hear the words of a Priest of Isis to a candidate, as recounted by the Priest-Initiate of Isis and Osiris, Lucius Apuleius: "Now at last you have put into the harbour of peace and stand before the harbour of loving kindness. Rest assured that you are now safe under the protection of the true Fortuna, all-seeing Providence, Whose clear Light shines for all the Gods that are! Rejoice now, as becomes a wearer of white linen. Follow triumphantly in the train of the Goddess Isis, Aset Shemsu. As you enrol yourself in her Holy Order, know that Her service is perfect freedom."

Pr. Tehuti. Let the Candidate read to us all the words of Lucius Apuleius, as newly accepted follower of the Shemsu of Isis.

Can: (*reads*) "The Company accepted me as one of themselves, a loyal devotee of the Great Goddess Isis. Not a single night did I pass, nor even doze off during the day, without some new vision of Her. She always ordered me to be initiated into Her sacred Mysteries, to which I had long been destined. I frequently spoke of this to the High Priest, begging him to initiate me into the Mysteries of the Holy Night. He checked my restlessness, so gently and kindly that I was not in the least discouraged. He explained that the day on which a postulant might be initiated during the Holy Night was always indicated by signs from The Goddess Herself. He said: "The Gates of the Underworld and the Guardianship of Life are in Her hands. By Her grace the Initiates of the Holy Night are born again and restored to new and healthy life."

Pr. of Osiris: When that time comes, my friend, you will be told by Isis.

Prs. of Isis: These are the words of Isis to Lucius Apuleius, as She appeared to him at night, shining over the sea: "I am Nature, the Universal Mother, Mistress of all the elements, primordial Child of time, Sovereign of all things spiritual, Queen of departed spirits, Queen also of the Deities, the single Manifestation of all Gods and Goddesses that are. Under My protection you shall be happy and glorious, and when at the destined end of your life you attain the Land of Spirits, you shall have frequent occasion to adore Me. From the Elysian Fields you shall see Me shining with a Light as kindly and tender as I show you now."

Prs. of Isis: (*anoints Can.'s brow with water*) May Isis bring you enjoyment of your forgotten immortality! (*Silver power may be felt flowing through head and body of Can. and white light seen. Prs. presents Can. with ankh.*) Accept this Ankh, the Sign of Life of Isis!

Prs. of Hermes: (*presents Can. with cord*) In the Name of the Goddess *** of this Iseum, accept this cord! The Sacred Cord links the mother with her baby, and with it are joined families, lovers and friends! (*Can. links ankh on cord and Pr. H. puts it round her/his neck*) The cord hangs loosely! Love and friendship must be free.

Omnes hold hands in circle to rhythmic music and circle 3 times, except veiled Priestess.

Manifestation of the Goddess

Pr. of Goddess of Iseum: Companions of this Iseum, the Holy Time has come! Power fills our Temple. Let us invoke the Divine Presence of our Goddess among us!

Curtains are drawn. Only light is from 3 candles on altar. Omnes sit except Priest who raises his arms and gives an inspired invocation. Silence. The Priestess is in trance and the Priest protects her aura from interruption. If there is to be no manifestation, the Priestess lifts her veil and gives an address or the given oracle. If a manifestation is to take place, companions will observe a quickening in the air like dancing sun-motes or swirling steam. A sphere of light may appear above and behind Priestess. The goddess may appear to clairvoyants or on extremely rare occasions, materialise for a short while.

The Oracle

The Divine Oracle is delivered through the Priestess. When it is finished, and the Priestess returns from trance, Priest gives her a glass of water.

Meditation

Meditation on Oracle and on work of Iseum, including use of talents of new member. Experiences are shared. Rays of friendship are sent forth to sister centres all over the world.

Love Feast

Companions welcome new member with handshakes and kisses and words of friendship. Wine, fruit-juice are blessed. New member is toasted. Bread is blessed. Love feast is shared.

Thanksgiving and Blessing

Priesthood give thanks to Vesta, Tutelary Goddess (Goddess and God), Isis and Osiris, Maat, Tahuti, Astraea, Hermes and Anubis.

Priest of Anubis: Let us go forth with the Divine Blessing.

End of Rite.

SOURCES: "The Golden Ass", Apuleius, trans. Graves, Penguin & trans. William Adlington, 16th Cent. "Fasti", Ovid, trans. Frazer, Harvard, Heinemann. "Juno Covella", (Vesta, 9th and 15th June) Durdin-Robertson, Cesara.

Copyright Notice: The FOI Liturgy from this website is copyright protected. Copying the Liturgy text or pages to another website or publication, is prohibited. Printing of individual rites by FOI members for their personal and group ritual use is encouraged and allowed.