

# *Pagan Religious Rights Ritual*

On the pages that follow you will find the text of the rite to be performed in Lafayette Square Park, Washington D.C. at 2 p.m. on July 4th, 2007.

I encourage other groups to participate by simultaneously performing this ritual, so long as its source is given. If you do so, please let me know when and where, how it went, and what could be improved. You can find out more about working with the Founding Fathers as ancestor spirits at <http://www.freedomfathers.org/> , and you can contact me at: [diana@westria.org](mailto:diana@westria.org)

To perform the ritual you will need a ritual leader, whose lines are printed in the Garamond font (this one). Prayers, the lines of the priest/esses who invoke the quarters, and those to be said by one, three, or six readers (the quotes from the Founding Fathers and the verses of the litany as they are numbered in the text) are printed in **Broadsheet**. Songs and responses to be said by all participants are in *italics*.

Elemental invokers stand at the 4 quarters of circle or on the 4 corners of a stage. Speakers stand in a circle around the altar, facing outward, or in line behind the altar. The Leader and Songleader (if any) stand beside the altar.

The tunes to “God Bless America” and “America the Beautiful” should be familiar. Music for the chants will be found on the last page. The Chorus from “Symbol” is used courtesy of Celia, its composer.

May the gods and goddesses bless you and this land!

Diana L. Paxson

## Recommended Ritual Gear:

Altar table

Flag or other patriotic print altar cloth

Candle or Liberty torch flashlight

Statue of Liberty image, statuettes or pictures of Washington, etc.

Song sheets

If offering is to be made as part of the ritual:

Pewter goblet or wine glass

East coast (Virginia or Concord Grape) wine, or a dark ale beer

Platter of cornbread

# *Pagan Religious Rights Ritual*

*July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Lafayette Square Park, Washington. D.C.*

## *Introduction:*

I welcome you, fellow children of this land, Sons and Daughters of Liberty. We have gathered here today to celebrate our country's independence, to honor those who fought for it, and to affirm the freedoms that they established here. These are the words of the First Amendment, upon which our freedom of religion depends:

**“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”**

We call upon the spirit of Liberty and upon the holy goddesses and gods. We call upon the leaders of our country to preserve the principles of separation of Church and State and religious liberty on which this nation was founded.

## *Establish Sacred Space:*

Oh Lady Liberty, Mother of Exiles,  
As the light of your torch shines upon this circle  
May this piece of American earth  
be consecrated to our purpose.  
As your torch enlightens America,  
may our working here  
radiate from sea to sea.

As this symbol of your light shines  
around the circle,  
illuminate this land!

*The torch or candle is carried around or shone over ritual space:*

Lady, ward this space with light,  
Keep the torch of freedom bright!

## *Invocation of America*

We invoke the land of America, the holy earth on which we stand. As we call the powers of each quarter, let those who come from that direction step forward or stand.

### **EAST:**

East we hail dawn's early light,  
winds that carry speech and song.  
Bless the words that ward our rights,  
That all may hear and keep them strong.  
Hail and be welcome!

*ALL: Hail and be welcome!*

### **SOUTH:**

South we see the blazing sun,  
Where fires of courage bravely burn.  
Bless the souls who freedom won,  
That we their loyalty may learn.  
Hail and be welcome!

*ALL: Hail and be welcome!*

### **WEST:**

West, the powers of water flow  
To bless the land we all adore.  
fulfill the hope that long ago  
First brought us pilgrim to this shore.  
Hail and be welcome!

*ALL: Hail and be welcome!*

### **NORTH:**

North, let solid strength of earth,  
Feed the folk who on it dwell.  
Your blessing grant to know the worth  
Of Liberty and ward it well.  
Hail and be welcome!

*ALL: Hail and be welcome!*

This is our land, our beautiful American earth. Let us sing a slightly adapted version of “God Bless America” by Irving Berlin to honor it.

*Gods Bless America, Land that I love  
Stand beside her, and guide her  
Thru the night with a light from above.  
From the mountains, to the prairies,  
To the oceans, white with foam,  
Gods bless America, my home sweet home.  
Gods bless America, my home sweet home.*

### *Invocation to the Gods*

Hail to the gods, hail to the goddesses  
Of this land, and of all lands  
Whose folk have sought freedom on these shores.  
Today once more we dare to stand,  
Hands raised in praise before you---  
We pray for the peace and prosperity  
Of all America!  
Bless our leaders with wisdom,  
Bless our world and our working  
With love and liberty!

Y

Let us honor the gods whom we seek to worship in freedom with a chorus from the song “Symbol”, from the CD *Red, Alabaster, and Blue*, by Celia—

*Freedom of Speech, freedom of Faith,  
Freedom of Religion,  
Freedom to stand up and fight  
For what we believe in!*

### *Invocation of the Freedom Founders*

Today we celebrate the birthday of the United States of America. 231 years ago, 56 brave men signed the Declaration of Independence, committing themselves and their country to a new and noble experiment, based on the idea that all are entitled to equal rights, and that citizens can take responsibility for making their own choices and guarding their own liberties. In the years since then our nation has undergone many changes as we learned what those rights are, and what

exercising them means.

Our ancestors were not perfect. They nearly destroyed the Native Americans whose lands they stole. They left the injustice of slavery as a festering sore to be lanced a century later in the Civil War. But they had the courage to try, and to set forth the very ideals by which we judge them. Hear the words in which our leaders have upheld and evolved the principles on which this nation stands.

This is how Thomas Jefferson stated our commitment to liberty.

1. **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”**

The Declaration goes on to say that it is the duty of a free people to make sure that their government protects these rights, and that if it does not, they have a right and duty to change it. As citizens of the United States, it is our responsibility to make sure that such action does not become necessary by reminding our leaders what those rights are and insisting they protect them.

In Jefferson’s memorial, you will find these words:

2. **“I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”**

**Thomas Jefferson, we call you to be with us now.**

George Washington gave his name to our capitol. He kept the Revolutionary Army together throughout the war despite all that the enemy, the elements, and his own quarreling countrymen could do. He could have been king, but he led the infant nation through its first years wisely and well, standing above faction, dedicated to preserving the liberties of all, and then had the faith to let go of power and trust others to carry on.

In a letter to the Jewish congregation in Rhode Island, George Washington said:

3. **“We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this Land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition, and that every person here may worship God according to the dictates of his own heart.”**

**George Washington, we call you to be with us now.**

John Adams was our second president. To him fell the task of leading the new country to take its place among the nations of the world. In Article II of the Treaty of Tripoli, Adams wrote:

4. **“As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen—and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any**

**Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”**

**John Adams, we call you to be with us now.**

James Madison set down the words of the Constitution, and continued to uphold its ideals. While respecting the rights of the states, he held that they must be subject to the nation's law. Madison wrote:

**5. “Ye States of America, which retain in your Constitutions or Codes, any aberration from the sacred principle of religious liberty, by giving to Caesar what belongs to God, or joining together what God has put asunder, hasten to revise & purify your systems, and make the example of your Country as pure & compleat, in what relates to the freedom of the mind and its allegiance to its maker, as in what belongs to the legitimate objects of political & civil institutions.”**

**James Madison, we call you to be with us now.**

In the years since the Founding Fathers lived, the city of Washington has been home to the leaders of this land. Each President has been called to interpret their words, and to apply the principles on which our nation was founded to new situations and needs. Abraham Lincoln, whose temple rises by the Potomac, established the principle that all, whatever their race, should be equal under the law. Others have fought to uphold that principle with laws that guarantee civil rights to African-Americans and to the first Native peoples of this land. With our rights come responsibilities. As president, Teddy Roosevelt upheld the rights of the other species with which we share the earth by beginning the movement to establish national parks.

But Americans do not live on this earth alone. After a war in which one nation of Europe tried to exterminate an entire people because of their religion, President Franklin Roosevelt articulated the principle of the Four Freedoms. He said:

**6. “The second (freedom) is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.”**

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt, be with us now.**

*[ If alcohol is permitted on-site say:*

American Alfar, Honored Ancestors, ye Mighty Dead of this land who established and upheld our freedoms, receive our offerings now.

*(Fill goblet )*

**To all those who fought for our liberty—  
May they inspire us, and may we keep faith with them.  
I offer this wine, made from (State) grapes,  
to the fathers and mothers of our freedom!**

*(pour wine onto ground)*

*(Uncover the platter of cornbread)*

Behold this bread, made from American corn,  
I offer it to the fathers and mothers of our freedom!  
Whether we worship one or twenty,  
Gods please grant us peace and plenty!

*(crumble bread over earth)*

OR

*If making the offering at the rite is not feasible, say:*

As you feast on this Independence Day, toast our Founding Fathers in wine of the country or beer, and pour out a libation in offering. ]

To honor the ancestors, here's a chant, based on an 18th century tune—

*Hail to the men of old  
Who freedom's story told  
and had the faith to make us free  
And pledged their lives for Liberty.*

*Working: Affirmation of Freedom*

We have summoned our Mighty Dead, our alfar, our ancestors. We stand on this sacred ground in company with the Founders of Freedom. Their wisdom guides us; our energy empowers them. Working together, our magic can change the world. As we chant this litany, send the energy whirling outward to flow along the lines of power that net Washington. See it spinning to the White House, up the Mall to the Capitol, along the road to the Veterans' Administration, transforming awareness, modifying perception, changing perspectives. May those of all faiths: Pagan, Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist and Hindu and every other in all their permutations, bear witness, understanding that the laws that protect our rights are the same laws that guard their own.

Together let us affirm the liberties the Founding Fathers established in this land with the response: "Let all faiths live in liberty; as we will, so mote it be!"

This is what will be:

**The rights of all religious communities will be respected—**

*Response: Let all faiths live in liberty,  
As we will so mote it be!*

1. All faiths will worship freely—
2. Religious communities will protect the rights of others as they do their own---
3. Children of all faiths will wear their religious symbols without fear---
4. Children of all faiths will be accepted by their schoolmates---
5. Parents of all faiths will retain custody of their children---
6. Guided by their faith, women will choose whether or not to bear children---
1. Individuals will live, love, and partner as their faith teaches---
2. Every community will have an interfaith organization, that includes pagans---
3. Clergy of all faiths will be welcome in hospitals---
4. The armed forces will have chaplains of all faiths---
5. Soldiers and sailors will worship without fearing their fellows as well as the enemy---
6. Veterans will be able to have pagan symbols on their headstones---
1. Prisoners will possess the symbols of their faith—
2. Prisoners will gather freely and peacefully to worship their gods-
3. Sacred places and temples of all faiths will be respected—
4. Communities and Government agencies will seek to understand and appreciate the diversity of faiths among us---
5. All faith-based agencies will be given equal opportunities---
6. The separation between church and state shall be maintained---

*Response:*

*Let all faiths live in liberty,  
As we will so mote it be!*

## *Devocation and Unsealing*

As we will, so mote it be—may that which we purpose with united will shape reality.

The time comes now to bring our rite to a close, but in our hearts the torch of liberty will continue to burn, and that light will enlighten our world.

Let us give thanks to all the powers that have protected us.

6. Franklin Delano Roosevelt,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
May the waters that cascade  
over the stones of your monument,  
like the seas that wash the coasts of this land,  
carry our faith in the four freedoms  
from America to the world.

5. James Madison,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
Your words have become  
the most fundamental law of the land.  
Forever guard them, and may the eagle  
that sits atop the Tree of Liberty  
keep watch and ward.

4. John Adams,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
The land you led has become a great power  
Among the nations of the world.  
Let us not forget  
that though we may choose peace or war  
because of an enemy's morality,  
We must never do so because of his religion.

3. George Washington,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
Father of our country,  
watch over this American Earth.  
As the shaft of stone that is your monument  
links earth and heaven,  
let it connect your spirit  
to this place that bears your name.

2. Thomas Jefferson,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
Let the light of Reason you served  
burn in every heart,  
illuminating our choices and decisions.

1. All ye who fought to establish freedom--  
Those whom we know  
And those whom we do not know—  
Men and women of good will  
who defended the right  
of all to serve the gods who call them,  
we thank you for joining our circle.  
As we go in peace, go with us  
To bear our message to the world.

In honor of the land we love, let us sing “America the Beautiful”, written by Katherine Lee Bates to a tune by Samuel Ward, and slightly adapted.

*O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America! Gods shed their grace on thee  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!*

*O beautiful for pilgrim feet  
Whose stern impassioned stress  
A thoroughfare of freedom beat  
Across the wilderness!  
America! America! Gods mend thine every flaw  
Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law!*

*O beautiful for heroes proved  
In liberating strife.  
Who more than self their country loved  
And mercy more than life!  
America! America! The gods thy gold refine  
Till all success be nobleness and every gain divine!*

*O beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years,  
Thine alabaster cities gleam  
Undimmed by human tears!  
America! America! Gods shed their grace on thee  
Till nobler men keep once again thy whiter jubilee!*

From this American earth we come. As we depart, let us carry the light of freedom to every corner of the land....

**NORTH:**

Northward gaze as we depart,  
Holy earth now make us strong  
To ward our rights with steady heart  
And keep our country free from wrong.  
Hail and Farewell!

*ALL: Hail and farewell!*

**WEST:**

Westward shall the ocean flow,  
The rivers roll down to the sea,  
Cleansed and nourished, now we know  
The price and power of liberty.  
Hail and farewell!

*ALL: Hail and farewell!*

**SOUTH:**

South, where once great passions flamed,  
Fu-el now the fire of peace,  
May all the heroes, known and named,  
guard our freedoms without cease.  
Hail and farewell!

*ALL: Hail and farewell!*

**EAST:**

Though east's bright dawn has passed away,  
The song of freedom rings out still---  
The air we breathe, the words we say,  
Shall bear the message of our will!  
Hail and farewell!

**ALL:** *Hail and farewell!*

We have thanked the Powers, now let us give thanks to our goddesses and gods.

Hail to you gods, hail to you, goddesses--  
Though our awareness of your presence fades  
We know that you are with us still.  
Hail to you, Lady Liberty, who guards our gateway.  
Though this space be returned to all good use  
As our ritual ends,  
Within our souls your light will continue to glow.

*Circle or shine around ritual space counterclockwise with Liberty torch.*

Torch of freedom, burning bright,  
Fill the land with holy light!  
Banish hate and bigotry,  
Free all faiths from sea to sea.

**ALL:**

*The circle is open but unbroken,  
Merry meet and merry part  
And merry meet again....*

## Founding Fathers Chant

Hail to the men of old, who free-dom's sto ry—told and had the faith to  
 6  
 make us— free, and pledged their lives for li - ber ty.

Words: Diana L. Paxson

Music: Adapted from the “President’s March”, an 18<sup>th</sup> century song in praise of George Washington. The original is available on *George Washington, A Portrait in Music*, by Douglas Jimerson (AmeriMusic, 2004)

## Chorus from “Symbol”

Free-dom of Speech, - free-dom of Faith, free - dom of Re - li gion, free-dom to  
 5  
 stand up and fight for what we be - lieve in

This chorus is from “Symbol”, written by Celia for the Pentacle Quest to get the Veterans’ Administration to approve the Pentacle as a symbol of faith on the headstones of Wiccan veterans. The entire song, a wonderful piece, is available on the CD *Red, Alabaster, and Blue*, through Singing Red Records, 2007. For more information about Celia, this song, and how to get a copy of any of her CDs, visit <http://www.celiaonline.com/>