

Panathenaia

A festival honoring the birthday of Thea Athena, matron of cities, civilization, wisdom and inspiration.

Our ritual today

The Panathenaia is a festival in honor of Athena's birthday. The ancient Athenians who held this festival looked upon Athena as matron of their city, and her role as city protectress was emphasized. At this ritual, we thank Athena for her many spheres of interest, including giver of wisdom, sender of inspiration, and bringer of victory. It is an appropriate time to offer Her poetry, instrumental performance, and/or an athletic feat.

For this festival, ritual tools (such as a ceremonial knife for cutting the olive loaf) should be placed at the bottom of a basket full of barley.

Glossary

thea: Ancient Greek word for "goddess"

temenos: ritual area

khernips: spring water and sea salt

nator: baking soda and salt

Supplies for this ritual

khernips

nator

charcoal, matches, & lighter fluid for the fire

grill or fire pit

copy of Homeric Hymn #28

drinking goblets for each participant

drink for libations

basket of barley

olive loaf

loose incense or aromatic herbs

celebratory feast

eating utensils

image of Athena

Possible objects for the altar

aegis

helmet

spear

images of owls

images of snakes

olive oil

olive leaves and branches

aromatic herbs

almonds

oak branches

flax

wool

star ruby

turquoise,

amaranth

tiger lilies

geraniums

yew

galbanum

asafetida

scammony

Procession & Purification of People

Participants first process to the edge of the temenos. Here each person says, “Far off, far off, even to the profane!” while khernips (spring water and sea salt) is poured over their hands. They then may enter.

Purification of the Temenos

After calling for solemn silence, the priest/ess walks around the area sprinkling it with nator (baking soda and salt).

After this, the fire tender lights the fire saying, “I conjure you sacred fire whose mother is Hestia and whose Father is Hephaestos”.

First Libation

The herald says, “Sponde! Hestia, guardian of hearth’s fire, Yours is always the first and the last.”

Everyone pours a libation to Hestia and then drinks.

Hymnodia

Priest/ess will again request solemn silence.

Homeric Hymn #28 to Athena is read aloud by a volunteer.

Libation to Athena:

The herald says, “Sponde! Pallas Athena, glorious protectress, beloved gray-eyed thea, on this Your birthday we give You honor. Athena Workwoman, Weaving Thea, we honor You in our craftsmanship. Athena of the city, of the council, of the market, of the fore temple, matron of Athens, we honor You in our love, support, and service of our communities and cities. Athena of foresight, of wisdom and reason, we honor You in our continual quest for new knowledge and in our delight in discovery of new wisdom. Champion Athena, repeller of danger, Warlike Thea, thea of noble combat, defender of our homes, we honor You in our respect of the power of war and honorable aggressive action. Broad-faced Athena of the growing ivy, of the cypress grove, of horses, of health, golden protectress of youth, we honor the splendor of Your multiplicity in our awe at the variedness of this world. Many-skilled daughter of indestructible Zeus, we call upon You by whatever name pleases You and wish You a happy birthday.”

Everyone pours a libation to Athena and then drinks.

Libation to the Olympians as a group

The herald says, “Sponde! Immortal Olympians, come join our host.”

Everyone pours a libation to the Olympians and then drinks.

Sacrifice

At the conclusion of the libations, barley is passed from person to person. Everyone takes a small handful and tosses it into the fire. An olive loaf is broken by the priest/ess.

A small portion of the loaf is placed on the fire. The priest/ess says, “We begin with You, Hestia.” Participants repeat this phrase.

Placing another small piece on the fire, the priest/ess says, “And for You, Mighty Athena.” Participants repeat this phrase.

Placing another small piece on the fire, the priest/ess says, “And for You, Victorious Nike.” Participants repeat this phrase.

Individual participants may come forward, offer a pinch of incense or aromatic herbs, and say a personal prayer to Athena.

Activities

Ancient Athenians began the Panathenaia with a torch race, and over the course of the festival held competitions in sports, music, and poetry. In this vein, participants may read an original piece of poetry, perform an act of physical prowess, or play a piece on a musical instrument. Pieces relating to the Thea’ sphere of interest (civilization, wisdom, inspiration, craftwork, etc.) are especially appropriate.

Feast

Menu suggestions:

An olive loaf

Beef

Cabbage

Marinated olives

Feta cheese

Closing Libations

The herald says, “Sponde! Immortal Olympians, Come join our host.”

Everyone pours a libation to the Olympians and then drinks.

The herald says, “Sponde! Pallas Athena, glorious champion of the city, we praise You. On this Your birthday, we pay honor to Your presence in our craftsmanship, our urban communities, our search for knowledge and wisdom, our strategy and forethought, and our communities’ protectors and our abilities to protect. Beloved Athena of the tribes, Athena of counsel, Athena Workwoman, we honor the splendor of Your multiplicity. Gray-eyed daughter of the Aegis-Bearing Zeus, we call upon You by whatever name pleases You and wish You a happy birthday.”

Everyone pours a libation to Athena and then drinks.

The herald says, “Sponde! Hestia, guardian of hearth’s fire, Yours is always the first and the last.”

Everyone pours a libation to Hestia and then drinks.

The herald leads participants in saying, “Be brave, for all good things have come to pass!”

Participants clean the area so it’s as clean as (or cleaner than) when they arrived.