

## Chapter 2: The Service of the Logos

Ritual plays a crucial part in the life of our Church. Aside from our Statement of Principles, our rituals are an important way of maintaining the unity of the Church. A ritual is, to put it far too simply, a set of actions performed for symbolic value, and has been an integral part of human culture since our ancestors climbed down from their trees. Ritual, especially religious ritual, speaks to a part of us that is larger than each of us as individuals. It acts upon our genetic memory and connects us to those who have gone before. Whether a ritual is performed in community or alone in a corner of your living room, we find comfort in repeating the symbolic actions that tie us to our past, while continuing to live in the present and hope for the future. Remember that ritual acts on the subconscious, and by repeating patterns we build new neural pathways. That's why ritual works. By practicing and repeating the ritual we set up patterns that make it easier for us to remember to act in certain ways as we go about our daily life. Gnosis is about awareness, and true awareness is difficult to maintain as we go about our daily lives, but ritual builds subconscious patterns that helps to keep us in a mindful state more often.

The Service of the Logos is, essentially, an abbreviated version of the Johannite Gnostic Mass. It was developed in order to meet the ritual needs of seminarians and narthex leaders. The Service could be used as part of their own personal practice, or it could be part of the communal life of a Johannite group just starting out, before it has its own member of the clergy. It is being made available to you for the same reasons. This is the quintessential Johannite practice for all members of the Church.

The Logos Service is a ritual designed for use by everybody. It provides a solid framework and symbol set for all Johannite practice. I continue to use it as a part of my practice, even though I've been a priest for some time. It's short and easy to memorize, it's very customizable, and it's chock full of wonderful Johannite symbolism. This chapter will give you the text of the Service, explain what's happening during the ritual, and give you the information you'll need to perform the ritual on your own. Later chapters will give you tools to add to the Service, but for now, simply perform the Service as it is presented in this chapter until you get the hang of it. After you feel comfortable with it, continue reading the next chapters and add parts that you think fit with your personal style.

When you first start using this service it's a good idea to perform this ritual once a day at a consistent time. Performing it in the morning can set a nice tone for your day. Evenings provide an

opportunity to reflect and examine your conscience. Most importantly, perform the ritual at a time when you have the best chance to maintain consistency.

If you are leery about committing to the practice every day, and if you don't have the ability to attend a Johannite Mass regularly, just do it on Sundays. Once or twice a week is far better than nothing at all. If you start with once a week, do it that way for a few months and then start doing three days a week for a month or so, then every day. Ambitious Johannites may choose to do three times a day, using it as a sort of Divine Office. If you choose to practice this often, you might need to do a very short version in the afternoon if you are at work or school, but this is certainly admirable. Ultimately any practice is better than no practice, and maintaining awareness can and should happen outside of the context of ritual; but the more often you do ritual, the better your awareness will be.

The Logos Service is easily adapted for either solo or group practice. If you've been using the Service by yourself for some time, you may find yourself in a position to lead a group in the Service at a discussion group or prayer meeting. This can be a wonderful experience, and it's how I started out in the Church. Building community can be very rewarding, and there will be some tips for this towards the end of the book.

## Preparing for the Service

In a pinch, you can perform the Logos Service with nothing at all, but since the effectiveness of a ritual improves as more senses are stimulated, I suggest you gather together at least the following items:

- *A flat surface to be used as an altar*
- *A white (preferably linen) cloth*
- *A comfortable place to sit near the altar*
- *1 white pillar candle*
- *4 votive candle holders, 1 yellow, 1 red, 1 blue, and 1 green<sup>1</sup>*
- *4 votive candles*
- *Something to light the candles*
- *The text of the ritual*

At its most basic, the Logos Service is very simple. Anything additional you might want to add comes down to personal taste. If you prefer things simple and uncluttered then stick with the basics. If you like things a bit more busy, then there are a number of things you can add to your ritual space to stimulate the senses.

You might want to include a cross on or near your altar. You could use a plain cross for this purpose, or you could use a crucifix (a cross with the corpus, the body of Jesus, on it) if that symbolism appeals to you. Burning incense is a great way to get your sense of smell involved. Fresh flowers are always appropriate, as are religious images and statues, icons, or inspirational photos. If you would like to include holy water you can often get some at your local Johannite, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox church. There will usually be a large font somewhere near the front of the church for people to take some home for their personal use. You can include just about anything that inspires you, but remember that objects used for rituals are most effective if they are only used for rituals. Don't light your sacred candles if you just want to add a little atmosphere, save those for your rituals only. Patterns and repetition are what you are working towards.

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<sup>1</sup>If you can't find colored candle holders, then you might try substituting the votive candles with candles of the appropriate colors. This can be tricky, however, because colored candles are often scented. If you have to use scented candles, be careful to pick scents that go well together.

## Setting Up Your Space

Any available space will do for your religious practice, and you can make very effective use of many different kinds of spaces with a little creativity. If you feel a strong connection with nature, go outside. If you feel mystical and esoteric, a dark windowless basement room might serve well. If you have the space to set aside permanently a small chapel or ritual chamber then count yourself lucky. Chances are, however, that you will have to find a corner of a room or make use of a multi-purpose space for your practice. This is fine, but keep in mind that there are a different set of challenges if you are using space in a room that you use for some other purpose. Our brains make strong connections to places. For example, if you use your kitchen table as your altar, your subconscious already associates certain emotions with that table. Happy conversations with your loved ones, family arguments, discussions about money troubles, craft projects; you will be forcing your religious practice to share space with all those things in your mind. This is not insurmountable by any means, you just might have to engage more of your senses in the ritual acts in order to make a more lasting impression.

Place your altar in the east of the space if possible, since that is the traditional placement of the altar in many religions, not just Christianity. If you can't get it in the east, don't worry about it, just place it somewhere that makes sense. Drape your altar with a white cloth. Place the candles along the back of the altar (the side furthest away from where you will stand) in the following order, from left to right: yellow, red, white, blue, green. In whatever space you have left on the altar you may choose to place other inspirational items, the text of the service, or holy scriptures. Do not use it to hold your coffee or any other mundane item. The altar is only to be used for the ritual. If you use a kitchen table or other surface that normally serves another purpose, while the altar cloth is on it, it is no longer your kitchen table, it is an altar set apart for the service of the Divine. After you put your ritual supplies away it can go back to being your kitchen table.

A taper candle in a candle holder can be lit before the ritual begins so you can use it to light the archangelic candles and the Sacred Flame candle. Some find that it ruins the mood to use matches or a butane lighter after the ritual has begun. Also be aware that when using incense there is a danger of setting off your smoke alarms. Try to keep your area well ventilated when using incense. Nothing ruins a good meditation more than a blaring alarm all of a sudden. However, it is not recommended to shut off your smoke alarms or taking out the batteries. It's all too easy to forget

to turn them back on afterwards. Safety first. If this is a problem for you then perhaps incense isn't a good option at this time. That's okay. Fresh flowers also have pleasant odors that complement the ritual. Be creative and you'll do fine.

# The Text of the Service of the Logos for Lay Ministry

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*[In this text the instructions will appear in [brackets] and in italics. Everything not in brackets, excluding section headings, is to be said aloud. If the service is to be used in a group, the group responds where indicated with an "R:" and everyone responds where there is an "All:", otherwise the individual simply recites all the parts.]*

## **Calling of the Quarters**

*[All stand.]*

*[Facing east<sup>2</sup>, the yellow candle is lit, saying,]*

Leader: Hail Raphael, Ruler of Air, Divine Physician. As the breath of the Divine moves over the face of the deep, so do we call upon you to move over the sanctuary of our being, giving voice to our prayer and strength to our journey.

**R: Lord of Wind and Storm, we invoke thee!**

*[Facing south, the red candle is lit, saying,]*

Leader: Hail Michael, Ruler of Fire, Divine Guardian, As a pillar of fire guided our ancestors through darkness, so do we call upon you to light our path through the wilderness of ignorance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

**R: Lord of Flame and Prince of the Seraphim, we invoke thee!**

*[Facing west, the blue candle is lit, saying,]*

Leader: Hail Gabriel, Ruler of Water, Divine Messenger. As your presence foretold the Incarnation to our mother Mary, so do we call upon you to help us know ourselves as children of the

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<sup>2</sup>Turning to face in the various directions associated with the archangels is optional, but helps to better establish the sacred space, both in your mind, and as a spiritual reality. If you find that spinning around creates logistical problems for your space please feel free to omit that and simply face your altar throughout.

Divine Beloved.

**R: Lord of Stream and Ocean, we invoke thee!**

*[Facing north, the green candle is lit, saying,]*

Leader: Hail Uriel, Ruler of Earth, Divine Companion. As you stand guarding the gates of paradise, so do we call upon you to guide us at our last through the portal of that undiscovered country, from which no traveler returns.

**R: Lord of Stone and Vale, we invoke thee!**

Leader: Master and Lord our God, You have established in heaven the orders and hosts of angels and archangels to minister to Your glory. Grant that the holy angels may enter with us, that together we may serve and glorify Your goodness. For to You belongs all glory, honor, and worship, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**All: United as one sacred communion with those who were and those who will be, we declare this space and our time here to be holy. Together with the Most High we raise a temple of living stones from the myriad with which we have been blessed, both light and dark. As one, we fashion a temple for your power, an altar for its reception and a sanctuary for your people. Amen.**

*[The white pillar candle is lit, saying,]*

Leader: I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled

**All: From the Portal of Air, To the Portal of Water, From the Portal of Fire, To the Portal of Earth, From the Center of Power, to the encompassing Adamant, Let this Sanctuary be established within the Sacred Flame.**

### **Meditation**

Leader: The One has brought forth the One, then One, and these Three are but One: [sign of the Cross+] the Father, the Word and the Thought.

**All: Amen**

*[Meditation, practice or prayer will go here. The group may be seated.]*

Leader: May the Peace of God which is beyond all understanding keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. This we ask in the name of [sign of the Cross+] the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen**

**Dismissal**

*[All stand]*

*[As the ritual ends, the candles are extinguished, yellow:]*

Leader: Hail Raphael, Ruler of Air, Divine Physician. we thank thee for thine attendance and protection here and before thou departest for thine airy realms, we bid thee hail and farewell.

**R: Lord of Air, Hail and Farewell!**

*[Red:]*

Leader: Hail Michael, Ruler of Fire, Divine Guardian, We thank thee for thine attendance and protection here and before thou departest for thine fiery realms, we bid thee hail and farewell.

**R: Lord of Fire, Hail and Farewell!**

*[Blue:]*

Leader: Hail Gabriel, Ruler of Water, Divine Messenger. We thank thee for thine attendance and protection here and before thou departest for thine watery realms, we bid thee hail and farewell.

**R: Lord of Water, Hail and Farewell!**

*[Green:]*

Leader: Hail Uriel, Ruler of Earth, Divine Companion. We thank thee for thine attendance and protection here and before thou departest for thine earthy realms, we bid thee hail and farewell.

**R: Lord of Earth, Hail and Farewell!**



*[The Sacred Flame candle is extinguished.]*

Leader: I give thanks to thee! Every soul and heart is lifted up to thee, O undisturbed name, honored with the name 'God' and praised with the name 'Father,' for to everyone and everything comes the fatherly kindness and affection and love and any teaching there may be that is sweet and plain, giving us mind, speech and Gnosis: Mind, so that we may understand thee Speech, so that we may expound thee, Gnosis, so that we may know thee.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

## Explanation of the Text

The text is short and sweet, so it is a great place to begin a spiritual practice. It's also very profound if you treat it with reverence and consistency. It has three parts, the Calling of the Quarters, Meditation, and Dismissal. Each part serves a particular function, and no matter what embellishments you might choose to make, it's important that you maintain this basic structure. A brief explanation will be given of each element of the Service here; but, as with most things in Gnosticism, much benefit can come from meditation on each word or phrase. A lifetime of study can be spent with just this small ritual.

### Calling of the Quarters

In this section five candles are lit and we ask four of the archangels for their presence during the ritual. We call the archangels both as witnesses and to protect our sacred space during the ritual. The orders and hosts of angels and archangels have the specific duty to minister to the glory of the Divine, and that makes them particularly eager to assist us when we perform the Johannite rituals.

These four particular archangels come to the Johannite tradition from Hermeticism. The four Greek classical elements are Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. It was their belief that all matter was made up of different combinations of these four elements. Through centuries of observation in the Hermetic and alchemical arts, these four elements are recognized to have a spiritual reality all their own. It is this reality that we call upon in our ritual.

In Hermeticism the use of correspondences is very important. The Hermetic axiom "as above, so below" illustrates this principle. For example, Air corresponds with the intellect, communication, the planet Mercury, the zodiacal sign of Gemini, the Kabbalistic Sephirah Hod, and many, many other things, some of them quite contradictory. This adds much richness to their study. There are many books and websites that go into detail about the Law of Correspondences, the study of which will greatly improve the quality of your Johannite practice, but that is beyond the scope of this book. Air is also represented in the Choirs of Angels by the Archangel Raphael. Raphael is the healer, and his<sup>3</sup> name in Hebrew means "It is God who heals." It is always appropriate to pray to the archangel

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<sup>3</sup>Angels are usually considered either symbolically genderless or androgynous, but the English language being what is is, it would be awkward to try to work around our language's gender biases. Therefore I hope readers will understand that my use of male pronouns for the archangels is simply a matter of expediency.

Raphael when someone is sick. Raphael is also associated with learning, and in honor of this the Johannite seminary is called the St. Raphael the Archangel Seminary.

Raphael is called first because his station is in the east, and in a traditional church the altar is placed in the east. His color is yellow because of the traditional Hermetic association of Air and the color yellow. All of the archangels follow the Hermetic color scheme associated with their elements.

When lighting the yellow candle it is always helpful to visualize Raphael joining you in the east of your space. You can picture him in yellow robes and holding a sword (for the association of Air with the tarot suit of swords). The more rich and full your visualizations are, while stimulating as many senses as possible, the more effective the ritual will be. Remember that Raphael and the other archangels will be actually present with you in your ritual space, so it is important to treat them with respect. Make sure you won't be disturbed during your practice. They are very forgiving, though, and you shouldn't worry about making them angry (unless you are outright mean or intentionally rude) but keep in mind that you are developing a relationship with beings who will help you on your spiritual path. It is only right to treat them with the reverence and respect to which they are due.

Next you will light the red candle for the Archangel Michael, whose name means "Who is like God?" He is the field commander of the Army of God, leading the army against the dragon in the Book of Revelation. He is associated with passion and Fire, and he can be visualized in red robes and holding a flaming sword or a wand (the tarot suit associated with Fire). Michael's station is in the south of your space.

The blue candle is for the Archangel Gabriel, "God is my Strength." Gabriel is the messenger of the Divine, delivering prophecy and explaining visions. It was he who told Mary that she would soon bear a son who would be the Messiah. Gabriel governs Water and the emotions. Picture him in the west of your space in blue robes, holding a chalice.

Uriel is the Archangel of the earth whose name means "God is my Light." The element Earth is that which governs the mortality of all things, as well as those things pertaining to money. Uriel is sometimes referred to as "the Angel of Death" although he isn't to be feared. It is Uriel who will ultimately bring us to the Fullness. Uriel is stationed in the north, wears green, brown, or black robes, and holds either a coin or a pentacle.

Once all four Archangels are stationed in their respective quarters, we may now call upon the

Most High God to guard and defend us during our work. This is now a space outside of time and beyond the physical universe. We are acting now within a space of the Spirit, and the physical world and its concerns are no longer relevant to us. We light the Sacred Flame candle and we recall what Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke: "I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?" In this way we remember the Sacred Flame within us and create an external representation of it. This focuses our attention on the work at hand.

The next paragraph creates the final seal to our sanctuary. It reinforces the four quarters and places them within the context of a circle, subtly calling to mind the challenge of Sacred Geometry to "square the circle" and Blaise Pascal's description of the Divine as a circle whose center is nowhere and circumference is everywhere. The Center of Power extends to the encompassing Adamant<sup>4</sup>, and the entirety of the sanctuary exists within the Sacred Flame. In this way we see that the Sacred Flame not only lives within us, but beyond us at the same time. Things of the Spirit are often described using such contradictions.

### **Meditation**

The meditation begins with the words that revived the modern Gnostic church in the late 1800s: "The One has brought forth the One, then One, and these Three are but One: the Father, the Word and the Thought." These were the words received by Jules Doinel in a vision that inspired him to restore the Gnostic Church to the world after centuries of repression. This phrase refers to the emanations that were mentioned earlier in the Statement of Principles.

It is this section of the ritual that you will expand upon by including a prayer system, meditation, or contemplative practice of your choice. For now, just say a short prayer in this spot or spend a few minutes in silent meditation. The Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary are good to start with because many people will be at least familiar with them, but anything will do for now. Repeat the prayer a few times if you feel like you need to spend more time. The important thing is just to start. The first few times you perform this Service, do it simply and become comfortable with the words and gestures. This entire process should be cumulative, so don't be tempted to jump into the more complicated stuff until you have most of the Logos Service starting to roll off the tongue. Rote memorization is not required; you can read from the text for as long as you need to. Once you get the

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<sup>4</sup>Adamant is a word used in some Gnostic texts to describe the Pleroma, or Fullness.

pattern down you will be eager to add more.

After the prayer or meditation we ask the Divine to seal the effects of our work in our hearts and minds when we leave our ritual space. This helps us to remember the effects of our practice as we go about our daily lives.

### **Dismissal**

In a ritual sense, the dismissal is the part where we thank the spiritual beings that we called at the beginning and let them know that we are finished. It is only right that we thank the Archangels for their attendance and protection during our ritual. We thank them in the order in which they were called, and we bid them farewell so that they are aware that the ritual is over. They return to their places in the world of Spirit and bring with them the energy they've received from our ritual.

The ritual ends with gratitude to the Most High, honored with the name 'God' and praised with the name 'Father.' We acknowledge the teachings we have experienced and the gifts of understanding, sharing, and knowledge that come to us from the Divine. We can now leave our ritual space and return to the world a little better off than when we began.

## How to use the Logos Service for your practice

Once you have become familiar with the ins and outs of the Logos Service by doing it for a few weeks with a simple prayer in the meditation section, it's time to begin adding some more robust practices to our framework. The next several chapters will show you some techniques that have proven to be effective for many Johannites who seek the path to Gnosis. This list is by no means exhaustive. You may find many other techniques and practices on your journey that may work just as well or even better for you, so feel free to try things out. The only rule is to use what works and brings you the Gnosis of the Sacred Flame.

Your chosen practice will go into the Logos Service where indicated in the meditation section. The practices chosen for this book fit rather seamlessly into the Service, as they don't have a lot of other props and equipment to deal with. A good practice to fit into the Logos Service will be fairly uncomplicated. It isn't recommended that you include another ritual in its entirety, as that may create confusion. Especially if the ritual or practice in question has its own set of ritual tools and symbolism that were completely different from those of the Logos Service. That wouldn't make them bad rituals by themselves, but they wouldn't fit smoothly into the Johannite framework.

I know that many of my Johannite brothers and sisters are interested in other faith traditions in addition to Johannite spirituality. Some traditions fit more nicely into the Logos Service framework than others. Since the Johannite Church is a Christian church, many practices from mainstream Christian traditions work well in this context.

Buddhism is another tradition that seems to be always on the periphery of Gnosticism. Practices such as mindfulness meditation and chanting mantras can complement Johannite spirituality. Care should be taken, however, to make a clear distinction between Buddhist and Johannite symbols. They sometimes blend in ways that can be confusing to those who don't have much experience noting the differences.

Judaism intersects nicely with Gnosticism through its Kabbalah traditions. Many modern Gnostics have no trouble flipping back and forth between Gnostic and Kabbalistic terms and symbols. There are many worthwhile practices you can explore through the Kabbalistic schools that could work very well with the Logos Service.

The Sufi tradition of Islam also has a great deal of overlap with Gnosticism. Sufi practice has

the same aim as Gnostic practice, but in an Islamic context. The interested student could find a wealth of treasures to explore among the Dervishes.

There are practices from the Hermetic traditions that are a natural fit for the Logos Service. Meditations on the Tarot, planetary or zodiacal influences, or alchemical symbols will bring much illumination to many of the symbols in the Johannite tradition.

The Neo-Pagan movement, while not specifically Gnostic in itself, its roots lie in the Gnostic and occult revivals of the medieval period and later. Many of the practices of modern Wicca, Druidism, and Shamanism often find a crossover into a Gnostic's practice.

Whatever other tradition you choose to incorporate into your practice, remember the goal: Gnosis. If you find, after a time, that a practice is not helping you to clear your mind of unwanted thoughts and reactions, you should discontinue it. There are virtually infinite choices out there, and it's not worth wasting your time on a practice that doesn't work simply because the aesthetics of it appeal to you.