

Samhain Ancestors Ritual by Selena Fox

The ritual here is presented as a personal ritual to be done at Samhain time. It also can be incorporated into spiritual practice with Ancestors throughout the year and it can be adapted for use by a group. This ritual works with Ancestors of three types: (1) Family Ancestors, deceased loved ones you are related to by blood/adoption; (2) Cultural Ancestors, heroes and sources of folkways that are part of your heritage; and (3) Spiritual Ancestors, traditions and teachers that have helped shape your spirituality.

The purpose of this ritual is to honor those in the Spirit world that are part of your Ancestral heritage and to deepen your awareness of and connection with them as part of observing Samhain, a festival time long associated with commemorating the Dead. Perform this ritual at twilight or at night at Samhain time. If you celebrate Samhain over the course of several days and nights, perform this rite at the beginning of this period. You may also want to include work with the three Ancestral dimensions on the central night of the festival time.

Prepare for this ritual by reflecting on each of the three types of Ancestors. Create a list of Ancestral names for each type. Names can be listed linearly on a page or as part of some kind of symbolic pattern, such as within the shape of a circle or tree.

For Family Ancestors, list relatives who have died whom you have known and wish to work with. Also include full names, first names, nicknames, and/or surnames of Ancestors you have never met but wish to acknowledge. Include not only those you are directly descended from (deceased parents, grandparents, great grandparents, etc.), but also departed siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and other relations, including family pets. If you are adopted, include names of deceased loved ones in your adopted family, and, if known, those in your birth family. If you have done extensive genealogical research and have traced some of your lines back many generations, your list can take the form of your family tree, a computer database Ancestors index, or a notebook of research findings.

For Cultural Ancestors, list the cultures, ethnicities, and countries of your Ancestral heritage you wish to commemorate. You might want to include a sketch of a flag or other symbol for each one on the list. Remember to include the country in which you are doing the ritual. In addition, list heroes -- those deceased females and males whose lives, character traits, and/or accomplishments have been sources of inspiration for you. These heroes can be historical and/or legendary figures you never physically met, as well as neighbors, friends, school teachers, work associates and others you have known while they were alive who have been important influences upon you.

For Spiritual Ancestors, list the religions, philosophies, and spiritual traditions which have nurtured you spiritually. Also include the names of spiritual leaders, teachers, authors, priest/esses, ministers, mentors, and guides who have crossed over to the Spirit world and who have aided you in your spiritual growth through direct contact while living and/or through writings, teachings, and other forms of legacy. If reincarnation is part of your spiritual orientation, you may want to commemorate spiritual influences not only on you in your present life, but also those from other lifetimes that continue to be important to you. Names on your Spiritual Ancestors list can take the form of specific individuals and paths as well as general terms, such as "Ancient Ones" or "Keepers of the Old Ways."

After preparing the three lists, assemble other items you will need for the ritual: 3 white votive candles, each in a votive glass; a black altar cloth; a small iron, ceramic, or wooden cauldron or bowl; a clear quartz crystal; matches or a butane lighter; frankincense, copal, or other incense that purifies and protects as well as assists in intuitive work; self-igniting charcoal block (if using incense in gum resin form); incense burner; dish of salt; bowl or chalice of water; wand or similar tool for creating sacred space; a bell; journal or paper and pen; a chair or cushion for sitting in meditation. The quartz crystal can be a single point or a cluster. Whatever crystal you select should be one that is cleansed of previous influences, through smudging and/or exposure to direct sunlight. It also needs to be one that can be dedicated for Ancestral work not only in this rite, but reserved for this purpose in the future. Attune yourself to the crystal as part of its selection process.

Select a time and place for this ritual in which you can perform it without distractions and interruptions. Within two hours of performing the ritual, take a purifying ritual bath or shower. As you cleanse yourself both physically and spiritually, and then garb yourself for ritual work according to your own spiritual tradition, reflect on Samhain as a time of spiritual transformation.

Next, set up the altar for the ritual using the materials you have assembled. Use your ancestral altar if you have one and it is large enough. Otherwise, use your personal altar or create an altar specifically for this rite. Cover the altar with the altar cloth. In the center, set the cauldron (or bowl) and place the crystal on top of it with its point up, if possible. Place each votive in its own votive glass, and then set them close to the cauldron, forming a triangle. To the North of the cauldron and crystal, place your Family Ancestors candle and set the list next to it. To the East, place your Cultural Ancestors candle and list. To the West, place your Spiritual Ancestors candle and list. To the South, place your chair or cushion. Arrange the other ritual items on the altar as you sense is appropriate. Have your journal and pen within easy reach to note any impressions or guidance that may come to you during the ritual.

Begin the ritual by blessing the ritual area. Light the incense in the incense burner and move it clockwise around the area, beginning in the North. Next, mix some salt into the water, and sprinkle it clockwise around the area as you did with the incense. Then, beginning in the North behind the altar, move clockwise around the area with a wand or similar ritual tool, and visualize and set in place a circle of radiant white Light to bless and protect your ritual. Next, invoke the Divine as you know It/Them and ask for Divine guidance in your working.

As you stand, pick up the crystal, and holding its point upward, say: "Ancestors, I remember you. Ancestors, I honor you. Ancestors, I call to you. Ancestors, I invite you to work with me in forms and in ways beneficial to you, me, and future generations. Ancestors, aid me now in creating and sustaining this gateway for communication and understanding between you and me." Be silent and attune yourself to Ancestors and the Ancestral realm as a whole. As you do this, begin to sense a radiant light emanating from the crystal, serving as a communication link with the Ancestral realm. When this is in place and you sense that the Ancestors are ready to work with you, set the crystal back in the cauldron, and proceed with the rite.

Still standing, light the Family Ancestors candle and say: "Family Ancestors, I call to you. Family Ancestors, I honor you. Family Ancestors, I welcome you. Connect with me.

Guide me. Bless me and my life." Be seated and meditate in silence. Pay attention to which Ancestor(s) from your list come to mind. Pay attention to any Ancestors not specifically named on your list who may come to mind. Note impressions and guidance in your journal. After experiencing and noting what comes through as a result of your call to the Family Ancestral realm, you may also want to call by name particular Ancestors and speak special messages. If you decide to do this, call one Ancestor at a time and meditate on any responses you receive to your message, before calling the next one. You can do the calling and meditating connected with specific individual Family Ancestor work while seated. When you are done working with the Family Ancestors dimension, pick up your Family Ancestors candle and say: "Family Ancestors, I thank you." Place the candle, still lit, on top of the list, to signify your thanksgiving to the dimension as a whole as well whatever individuals you connected with.

Now stand, light the Cultural Ancestors candle, and say: "Cultural Ancestors, I call to you. Cultural Ancestors, I honor you. Cultural Ancestors, I welcome you. Connect with me. Guide me. Bless me and my life." Be seated and meditate in silence. Pay attention to which countries, ethnicities, cultures, and heroes from your list come to mind. Pay attention to any not specifically named on your list who may come to mind. Note impressions and guidance in your journal. Should there be a particular hero or culture you wish to specifically call and work with, do this after you have meditated a time following your call to the Cultural Ancestral dimension as a whole. When you are done working with this dimension, pick up your Cultural Ancestors candle and say: "Cultural Ancestors, I thank you." Place the candle on top of the list.

Next, stand, light the Spiritual Ancestors candle, and say: "Spiritual Ancestors, I call to you. Spiritual Ancestors, I honor you. Spiritual Ancestors, I welcome you. Connect with me. Guide me. Bless me and my life." Be seated and meditate in silence. Pay attention to which mentors and spiritual paths from your list come to mind. Pay attention to any not specifically named on your list who may come to mind. Note impressions and guidance in your journal. Should there be particular Spiritual paths and mentors you wish to work with, call them one by one, with a meditation time following each call. In doing individual work, you may find it helpful to silently chant the name of the teacher or tradition several times after verbalizing and also visualize an associated symbol or sigil. When you are done working with this dimension, pick up your Spiritual Ancestors candle and say: "Spiritual Ancestors, I thank you." Place the candle on top of the list.

Before ending the ritual, look over whatever you have noted down and make any additional notations. When you are complete with this, stand up and gaze upon the pattern of the three candles around the crystal in the cauldron. Then say: "Ancestors, thank you all for connecting with me, for guiding me, and for blessing me. Continue to work with me. May your flames of wisdom continue to shine within me." Taking the candle snuffer, extinguish the Family Ancestors candle, then the Cultural Ancestors candle, and finally, the Spiritual Ancestors candle. Holding the crystal in your hands, say: "Ancestors, thank you for your work with me and this crystal in creating the gateway for this rite." Visualize the radiant light force field around the crystal being absorbed into the crystal for use in this way in future Ancestral rites. When this is done, set it on its side, with respect and appreciation.

To close, give thanks to the Divine as you called It and/or Them and give thanks to the sacred space. Uncast the circle by walking three times counter clockwise, while holding the wand and imagining the circle dispelling. Finally, ring the bell three times to dispel any residual

energy from the rite no longer needed. Store the crystal in a piece of silk or in a wooden box. Store the votive candles for use in future Ancestral workings. Keep your writings from this ritual in a safe yet convenient place for later reference.

Selena Fox has been designing and leading rituals for nearly thirty years. Some of her rituals have been published in past issues of this magazine, in anthologies and other periodicals, and on the internet (<http://www.circlesanctuary.org>). In addition to facilitating rituals at Circle Sanctuary, Selena guides rituals and workshops as part of speaking travels. In July, 2000, Selena guided an earlier version of this ritual as part of her Ancestors workshop at the Sacred Space conference in Maryland. This ritual is part of a work in progress. For more information about Selena and her work, contact her: Selena Fox, Circle Sanctuary, PO Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572; (608) 924-2216; circle@mhtc.net; home page: www.mhtc.net/~selena.