

A Rite of Queering

I. A WELCOME AND AN INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Welcome to this Rite of Queering. A rite or ritual is a "transformance"—a performance designed to change, to transform, a situation.

Queering is an action. Originally, “queering” was understood as a way of challenging and questioning structures and beliefs about gender and sexuality, but it has grown into a broader thing—a way for addressing identity as well as a range of systems of oppression.

Queering is a type of holy subversion. To confront and question oppressive things. Particularly patriarchy and its ideological offspring.

This Rite of Queering is a participation *in* and an initiation *into* the revolutionary work of the Holy Spirit, who is making all things new. The One who subverts oppression and domination in our world.

But it is also a revelation of what has always been true, much like Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration was revealed for who he was...in the radiant presence of God, those chosen disciples perceived Jesus in truth.

And so it is, this ritual is about affirming what is already deeply true about the participant. A deep recognition of identity.

It is a ritual of Transformation and Transfiguration. And, above all, an initiation into the Queering work of the Holy Spirit, to whom we pray:

We welcome you, Spirit of Life.

Kindle our hearts with the fire of your love.

Blow where you will, tearing down every evil thing

And renew the face of the earth.

II. CALLING UPON THE ELEMENTS

We give thanks to the Creator, the giver of many gifts. We honor the four elements as gifts of our Creator.

Welcome, Earth. (*lift stone from altar*) We honor your presence. Thank you for your gifts of strength and stability. You are here, always and in all ways, holding and supporting us. Thank you for mountain, stone, pebble, and sand. Thank you for holding our dead, and releasing them as new life, from seed to mighty oak.

What falls to the earth will return, like Christ from the tomb.

Welcome, Water. (*lift cup from altar*) We honor your presence. Thank you for your gifts of fluidity, gentleness, patience, and persistence. Thank you for teaching us how to flow. Thank you for cleansing us, sustaining us, and renewing us in each moment.

Christ was baptized into your ways...the way of gentle and patient power. May we also follow in this way.

Welcome, Air. (*lift feather from altar*) We honor your presence. Thank you for your gifts of lightness and freedom. Thank you for teaching us how to dance lightly, untethered. Thank you for the way you mess our hair to remind us that life is too short and too beautiful to be taken too seriously.

You are breath. You are wind. Christ reminds us that you blow wherever you please. May it be so with us.

Welcome, Fire. (*lift candle from altar*) We honor your presence. Thank you for your gifts of discernment, focus and passion. Thank you for helping us find our way back to the path when we have lost our way. You cleanse, you purge, you judge, but you also give passion.

When Christ poured out his Holy Spirit, you danced over the heads of the disciples and tore away their old world and brought them into the new world. Burn our hearts so that we might build a new world among the ashes of the old.

III. THE LIGHT OF CHRIST AND THE QUEERING FIRE

(At this point, have a member of the assembly light the well-prepared bonfire.)

May the Giver of Life shine upon all who have gathered here,
All who bear witness, themselves elements animated by Spirit.
May the light of Christ, rising in glory
Dispel the shadows from our hearts and minds.
And may the fire of the Spirit
Ignite within us, so that we might transform as we are transformed.

IV. CALLING UPON THE SAINTS and ANCESTORS

St. John, pray for us.
St. Brigid, pray for us.
St. Wilgefortis, pray for us.
St. Hildegard, pray for us.
St. Marinos, pray for us.
St. Bayard Rustin, pray for us.
St. Marsha P. Johnson, pray for us.
St. William Stringfellow, pray for us.
St. Henri Nouwen, pray for us.
St. Sylvia Rivera, pray for us.
St. Audre Lorde, pray for us.
St. Jacoba, pray for us.

May all the council of blessed ancestors...every holy one who joined in the great Queering work of the Spirit, bear witness with us now.

V. GRIEF AND LAMENT

Part of the work of transition is grieving. Our relationships with the one we called “old name” held hopes, assumptions, joys, struggles, and shared meanings. Some of those things must pass. We grieve to make room for what is to come.

We lament our oppressive society. One forged in patriarchy and supremacy. Cisgender and heterosexual assumptions are as hard and unbending as the bars of a cage.

At this time, we invite those gathered to write your griefs and laments on a slip of paper and bring them to the fire of transformation. You may give voice to them if you choose, or simply place them within the flames.

(After the gathered have placed their slips of paper into the fire, the attendant will scoop out some of the ashes and place them in a bowl. There they will cool, waiting for the time of anointing.)

VI. THE CALL TO QUEERING

Dear siblings, it is a mistake to assume that the normal mode of humanity is cisgender and heterosexual. As though queerness is a deviation from what it means to be human.

Some ancient and medieval religious scholars concluded that Adam wasn't “male” until a rib was removed to make a “female.” They believed Adam was fundamentally nonbinary, and that the essence or soul of human beings encompasses the fullness of the gender.

They believed Jesus, the Second Adam, is the firstborn from the dead—one who has risen to transcend anything like a gender or sex binary. And that this Jesus dwells, intimately and sensually, with us here and now.

Jesus is Queer. And through the Spirit, calls us to participate in that Queerness.

VII. A VOW OF RENUNCIATION

Do you oppose Patriarchy and all his wicked offspring? *(I do)*

Do you renounce the sinfulness of Oppression and all its structures? *(I do)*

Do you reject the glamour of evil and, instead, embrace divine beauty? *(I do)*

Will you joyfully participate in the Spirit's Great Work of Queering? *(I will)*

VIII. THE GLITTER ASH OF AFFIRMATION

Queering is rooted in hope. While many of you may grieve what has passed, there is also joy in what is to come.

At this time, we invite you to share your hopes and affirmations for the initiate. Take a pinch of glitter and add it to the ash. You are free to speak your hopes and affirmations or offer them silently.

(As the gathered share their hopes and affirmations, they will take a pinch of glitter and add it into the bowl of ash.)

IX. ANOINTING WITH OIL, ASH, AND GLITTER

Ash for transformation and glitter for hope.

Bound together with the oil of the Holy Spirit's anointing.

The ancestors and the elements bear witness.

You, my siblings, bear witness.

Christ bears witness.

(Take the bowl filled with ash and glitter and add a bit of oil. Stir it and anoint the candidate with the mixture of glitter, oil, and ash.)

X. BLESSING THE NEWLY NAMED

“ old name ” has been consumed by this holy flame, in which the Spirit dwells. And, just as Christ has risen from the dead and the phoenix raises from the ashes, you too shall enter a new life.

Your name is “ new name ”.

You have been born from the flame.

May the four elements, the ancestors, and all gathered, bless you,

May the Risen Christ be ever-present to you,

As you join the Spirit in the Great Work of Queering,

Which renews the face of the Earth. Amen.