Religio Romana Demystified

Mystic South – Atlanta, GA
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Nova Roman Sacerdos Herculis
I have been a polytheist for over a decade. I started out eclectic, but my love of historical research in my undergraduate studies eventually drew me into reconstructionism.

I currently practice Fyrnsidu, the worship of the gods of the Anglo-Saxons, as well as Religio Romana, the worship of the Roman Gods. I’m a member of Nova Roma, where I serve as Sacerdos Herculis as well as the regional governor for the Southeastern United States.

Although I did most of my undergraduate elective courses in history, I do not have a history degree. I underwent the Nova Roma priesthood training program for a year before I was consecrated as a priest.
WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

- Common Misconceptions
- Core Concepts
- Sacrifice Essentials
- Questions/Discussion
Common Misconceptions
Misconception #1

• You have to have Roman ancestry to practice Religio Romana.

• The truth:

Now as in ancient Rome, anyone from any background can worship the Roman gods.
Misconception #2

- The Roman Gods require live animal or blood for sacrifices.

- The truth:

Roman gods do not require either. In household worship, offerings of incense, wine, milk, and food were most common.
Misconception #3

• You have to know Latin.

• The truth:

Conducting rituals in your native tongue is absolutely acceptable and normal.
**Misconception #4**

- **Religio Romana is stuffy and purely transactional.**

- **The truth:**

  The Romans had a meaningful, spiritual connection with their gods, and we can, too.
CORE CONCEPTS OF THE CULTUS DEORUM
Core Concepts

- **Religio Romana** – The Roman Religion
- **Cultus** - established rites and customs of worship
- **Cultus Deorum Romanorum** – The Cult of the Roman Gods, or the established rites and customs of worshipping the Roman gods.
  - Someone who practices CDR is called a **cultor/cultrix** (pl. cultores).
Core Concepts

- **CDR is a polytheistic and Animistic religion.**
  
  - **Polytheism** – The world is full of gods
  
  - **Animism** – Every person, animal, object, and place has a divine aspect. In Religio Romana we call these divine spirits **Numina** (sing. Numen).
Core Concepts

- **Orthodoxy** - “Correct belief”
  - One must believe certain things to be part of the religion.

- **Orthopraxy** - “Correct practice”
  - One must conduct actions (rituals) a certain way to be part of the religion.
Core Concepts

- **CDR is an orthopraxic religion.**
  - One is free to believe however they like, importance is on the correct performance of sacrifices.

- **Pius** – “Pious, devout”
  - In ancient Rome, to be *pius* meant to be someone who gives the gods their due by correctly performing sacrifices.
Core Concepts

- CDR is a reconstructionist religion.

- We seek to practice CDR as closely as possible to the way it was done in the past.

- The march of progress through history is not a straight line. However, Society has made a lot of social and technological progress since the age of Antiquity. We should practice CDR in a way that takes that into account, as if Roman culture had continued to this very day.
Core Concepts

- **Pax Deorum** - “Peace of the Gods”

- This is a **reciprocal** relationship where the gods maintain the welfare of Rome and its citizens, and in return the people perform the proper sacrifices to the gods.

- **Do ut des.** - "I give that you might give."
Core Concepts

• The two main areas of CDR are:
  • **Sacra Publica** – “public sacred matters”
    • Made up of the state organized cults and priesthoods led by the Collegium Pontificum.
    • In charge of public temples and sacrifices to the gods on behalf of all Roman citizens.
**Core Concepts**

- The two main areas of CDR are:
  - **Sacra Privata** – “Private sacred matters”
    - Household worship of the gods traditionally led by the *paterfamilias* or *materfamilias* (the head of the family).
    - Each household was free to worship any gods in their own way, so long as it did not interfere with *Sacra Publica*.
Sacrifice Essentials for Household Worship
Sacrifice Essentials

- A typical household ceremonial involves worshiping:
  - Lares - the numina of your hearth/home/land.
  - Manes - your ancestors.
  - Penates - the patron deities of your household.
  - Genius or Juno of the Paterfamilias/Materfamilias - the divine spirit(s) of the family
Sacrifice Essentials

Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:

- **Lararium** – “place of the Lares”
  
  - This is where household worship takes place.
  
  - Think of it as your own mini temple or home altar with images/statues of your lares and manes.
EXAMPLES OF LARARIA
Sacrifice Essentials

• Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  • Candle or oil lamp
Sacrifice Essentials

- Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  - Offering dish (patera)
Sacrifice Essentials

Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:

- Incense and optionally an Incense box (Acerra)
Sacrifice Essentials

- Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  - Incense holder/burner (*Turibulum*)
Sacrifice Essentials

• Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  • Wine or milk for libations
SACRIFICE ESSENTIALS

- Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  - Container to hold wine/liquid (*gutus*)
SACRIFICE ESSENTIALS

- Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  - *Libum* or bread

*Libum*  
*Bread*
Sacrifice Essentials

- Tools for performing a sacrifice in your home:
  - Something to drape over your head
RESOURCES FOR PRACTICE

Beginner-friendly ritual that I wrote

Printable Lararium Art to get you started

Daily Rituals from the Nova Roma Wiki
Questions
## References and Additional Reading

- **Beard, North, & Price:** *Religions of Rome*
- **Ogilvie:** *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus*
- **Rüpke:** *A Companion to Roman Religion*
- **Scheid:** *An Introduction to Roman Religion*
- **Turcan:** *The Gods of Ancient Rome*
- **Warrior:** *Roman Religion*
GRATIAS TIBI AGO! THANK YOU!
Do you have additional questions?
Chat with me on the Nova Roma Discord server or Instagram!

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