Death Priestxing

Jamie Waggoner  |  Mystic South 2023
Who is the Death Priestx?

The Death Priestx (gender-neutral term) is someone who tends the threshold of transition.

In this liminal space, they help the living navigate death, and assist the dead to share their wisdom with the living.
Who is the Death Priestx?

This tending can take many forms:

- Death Midwifery and Spiritual Companionship
- Hosting Funeral Rites and Vigils
- Necromancy and Mediumship
- Psychopomp Work
- Mindful Food Preparation
- Death Planning Info and Education
- Ancestor Work
- Caretaking of Places of the Dead
Why do we need Death Priestxes?

● Limited exposure to the process of physical death and dying is problematic

● Limited time for healthy grieving means our nervous systems are not able to cope with the pace of change that death can bring

● As a result, collective, trauma-born reluctance to deal with death continues to grow
Why do we need Death Priestxes?

- Death happens on multiple levels: our personal lives, in our communities, and in the realm of “that which is larger”
- People often need assistance and support through all of these transitions – large and small
- Skilled death priestxes can help!
The Good Death
What is the Good Death?

- The Order of the Good Death and the Death Positive Movement
- “…death itself is natural, but the death anxiety and terror of modern culture are not.”
- How do we work with this concept of the “good death” without bypassing very real structural inequalities?
The Daughters of Hades

- The goddess Makaria is the embodiment of blessed death—when the soul is settled, happy, and at peace in the Underworld.

- Melinoe is the goddess of unsettled ghosts and spirits, the restless dead, and those who haunt the living because they are unable to cross over to the Underworld.
The Daughters of Hades

Makaria and Melinoe together personify the concept that we have a direct responsibility to define the good death for ourselves, and to take steps to ensure it for ourselves and others.
Working with the Good Death

On the Personal Level

- Relationships: How do I give romantic relationships, friendships, partnerships, jobs, and other interactions a good death?
- Habits: How do I give outdated, undesired, or unnecessary habits and ways of thinking or being a good death?
- Resource: Symbolic Rite of Good Death
Working with the Good Death

On the Community Level

- Honoring our ancestors of blood and affinity
- Honoring the plants and animals that die to feed us, and mindfully preparing our food
- Honoring the other-than-human world around us that also experiences death
- Supporting communities and groups who are greatly impacted by death
Working with the Good Death

That Which is Larger

- How do we give a good death to white supremacy, colonization, capitalism and all forms of oppression?
- Are these things already haunting us? How do we propitiate their restless spirits?
Hosting a Vigil for the Good Death

- Sacred container for honoring the good death on multiple levels
- Held on/around the new moon each month
- Basic ritual that can be in-person or online
- Participants enter “time outside of time”
- Invitation to lean gently into the circle
Hosting a Vigil for the Good Death

- Everyone is given a chance to speak, but speaking is not required
- After each round of sharing, we sing a chant and take a few moments to sit in silence together
- We read a final valediction (closing prayer or poem) at the end of the vigil
- Some really cool things have emerged!
Hosting a Vigil for the Good Death

● SAVE THE DATE:
  Tuesday, August 15, 2023 at 6pm central

● Register via my website to get the Zoom link

● Resources to host your own vigil:
  Outlines, chants, prayers, poems etc. are all on our shared Google drive.
Getting Started
Getting Started as a Death Priest

- Conduct an honest self-assessment
- Build space to welcome this role in your life
- Gather some helpful allies
- Educate yourself on death and other relevant and/or intersecting topics
Honest Self-Evaluation

- Why do you feel called to this path?
- What do you hope to learn or gain?
- What are your unique gifts and talents?
- Risk assessment: do you have the necessary mental, emotional, psychic, and spiritual preparation?
Build Space to Welcome This Role

● Create a physical altar

● Establish at least one daily practice around death priestxing: grounding, centering, and daily prayers are all great practices

● Keep a journal or log of your progress
Helpful Allies for the Death Priest

- **Deities:**
  - Hades and His Retinue (Greek)
  - Osiris (Egyptian)
  - Hel (Norse)
  - Gwyn ap Nudd (Welsh)
  - Ereshkigal (Sumerian/Babylonian)

- You don’t have to work with deities if you don’t want to – you can have other Unseen guides and helpers, or none at all.
Helpful Allies for the Death Priest

- Plants:
  - Cypress, Violet, Rosemary, Thyme

- Animals:
  - Cicada, Snake, Crane, Vulture
Educating Yourself About Death

- The Order of the Good Death: www.orderofthegooddeath.com
- Ask A Mortician YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/@AskAMortician
- Mikayla Ricks (BIPOC Death Doula): www.mikaylaricks.com
- TalkDeath Resource Hub: www.talkdeath.com
Best Practices

● Be open to growing your skill set for holding sacred space. Death can bring out deep (and sometimes complex) emotions.

● Remember that consent is key – and impact is always more important than intention.

● Take good care of yourself.
“Memento Mori, Memento Vivere”
Connect with Me

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- Pre-order HADES from Llewellyn!
Way of the Weaver

Offering radically enchanted classes, events & community.

- www.wayoftheweaver.com
- Check out our podcast
- Now enrolling for Winter 2024 online module: Death Priestxing!
Thank you!