

## Blog #14—“Rings” Layered Upon The Circle

In Blog #13, I offered guidelines for how to set up and use a Ceremonial Circle, from a Tefist perspective. I also named a number of “rings”, each bearing four or eight themes (aka Correspondences, or “Cors”), rings that can be imaginatively layered upon the Ceremonial Circle. These rings—each one the same diameter as the Circle—might be thought of as stacked upon the Circle. Given several of these rings, each of the eight stations thereby comes to have a rich set of themes for ritual celebration: eight Festivals. I have listed below several rings, and their Cors, that I use. Note that this information works best with celebrations held at mid-latitudes and in the Northern Hemisphere.

Where does each ring start and end? Anywhere you want! This is so because the rings, like the Circle, are (or can be treated as) cycles. And cycles, like carousels, are ever turning; you can “jump on” a ring at any station. Even the stages of our human lifetime make a cycle (though we have to imagine how life’s Vanishing could be linked to its re-Emerging—a task made easier if you happen to believe in reincarnation!). Thus, you may begin the Ceremonial Circle, and the rings stacked upon it, at any station, and thus, at any date. However, when I describe them, as below, I usually “begin” each ring at North, which corresponds to Winter Solstice, 21 December.

THE FIRST RING (once the Circle’s Center and Circumference have been established) carries the Cardinal Directions—N, E, S, W—and the Intercardinal Directions—NE, SE, SW, NW. How do you know where these directions lie? Polaris (the North Star) is always at North, and the sun is always at South at noon, Standard Time. Of course, the directions can also be determined with a compass or with maps. (The four Cardinals may appear to form the corners of a square, a “diamond”, and if you add the Intercardinals, you may seem to have an octagon. But, really, the stations of every ring are best regarded as a succession of stops along the curved, continuous perimeter of the Circle, not as the corners of polygons.)

THE SECOND RING provides names for the eight stations (and for the Festival at each). It also keys the stations to the Cardinal Directions and associates them with dates on the calendar. The station names used by Tefistry are a mix of astronomical and Celtic (Gaelic) names. Note that

some of the names preferred by Wiccans and other Neodruids may differ from mine. Note also that there are many variant spellings and pronunciations of the Gaelic names. And note further that, in the interest of convenience, I have regularized and standardized all of the dates; some people use dates that differ a little from mine. My preferred names, directions, and dates are:

“Winter Solstice”, at North, 21 December  
“Imbolc”, at Northeast, 3 February  
“Vernal Equinox”, at East, 21 March  
“Beltane”, at Southeast, 3 May  
“Summer Solstice”, at South, 21 June  
“Lughnasa”, at Southwest, 3 August  
“Autumnal Equinox”, at West, 21 September  
“Samhuinn”, at Northwest, 3 November.

ANOTHER RING, augmenting the ring of names, directions, and dates, provides us with ritual colors for the eight stations and for the blocks of weeks that each station initiates. Note that the entire visible spectrum is used as we move through the seasons. This specific color scheme is my own creation. It is not set in stone, but over the years I have found it works pretty well.

Violet, for 1 December to 21 December  
Indigo, or Dark Blue, for Winter Solstice (21 December) to 3 February  
Light Blue, for Imbolc (3 February) to 1 March  
Blue-Green, or Teal, for 1 March to 21 March  
Dark Green, for Vernal Equinox (21 March) to 3 May  
Light Green, or Variegated Colors, for Beltane (3 May) to 1 June  
Yellow-Green, or Chartreuse, for 1 June to 21 June  
Yellow, for Summer Solstice (21 June) to 3 August  
Orange-Yellow, for Lughnasa (3 August) to 1 September  
Orange-Brown, or Tan, for 1 September to 21 September  
Rich Orange, for Autumnal Equinox (21 September) to 3 November  
Red, for Samhuinn (3 November) to 1 December  
Red-Violet, for Gladness Time, a one-week period, unique to Tefistry, that begins on the American Thanksgiving Day in late November. This ritual color links the Red and Violet “ends” of the ring.

Although this scheme somewhat slights the red parts of the spectrum, I find it works well enough. Note that cool colors go with Winter, green attends Spring, yellow attends Summer, and orange and red mimic the colors of Autumn.

A RING MARKING the Hours of the Day—actually, four portions of the day—can be next upon the Circle. Using this ring, we celebrate Deep Night at Winter Solstice; the Hours of Early Day (which includes sunrise) at Vernal Equinox; Mid-day at Summer Solstice; and the Hours of Late Day (which includes sunset) at Autumnal Equinox.

A RING FOR WHEN TO START the seasons links Winter with North, Spring with East, Summer with South, and Autumn with West. But the beginning dates of the four seasons need to be, in my opinion, adjusted to fit the place where we live. So, although in the United States we usually say that Winter begins on Winter Solstice, 21 December, and Spring begins on Vernal Equinox, 21 March—and so on—I have observed that the seasons where I live actually begin to change roughly three weeks prior to these traditional astronomical dates. Consequently, I choose to begin Winter on 1 December, Spring on 1 March—and so on. I am not alone in doing this, and I did not invent it; American meteorologists use this dating routinely.

A RING OF STARS honors Notable Stars that I have selected for each station. With two exceptions, you can find these stars by looking to the East after darkness has fallen (choose an open viewpoint with a low horizon). Thus:

Winter Solstice: The Winter Triangle (Rigel, Sirius, Procyon)

Imbolc: Regulus

Vernal Equinox: The Circumpolar Stars (Polaris and others)—to the North

Beltane: Arcturus

Summer Solstice: The Summer Triangle (Vega, Deneb, Altair)

Lughnasa: Antares—to the South

Autumnal Equinox: Stars of the Great Square

Samhuinn: Capella, Aldebaran, The Pleiades.

A SIGNS OF THE SEASON RING honors what nature is doing at each Festival. The Signs will depend on where you live and on what sort of weather you have had in previous weeks or months. You will need to

look around yourself to see what is current and salient in the natural world. For example, at Vernal Equinox you may find specific birds are migrating, specific flowers are blooming, and specific trees are leafing out. At Winter Solstice you may have ice, or rain, or snow, or fog, or sunshine. Each station has its own Signs of the Season, and these signs will vary somewhat in each place from year to year.

A VERY IMPORTANT RING honors the Stages of Human Life. (Each Stage is linked to many important attributes, but space does not permit listing them here.) Thus:

Winter Solstice honors Inception (Conception), followed by Gestation.  
Imbolc honors Birth, followed by Infancy and Younger Childhood.  
Vernal Equinox honors Older Childhood.  
Beltane honors Puberty, followed by Adolescence and Younger Adulthood.  
Summer Solstice honors Older Adulthood.  
Lughnasa honors Midlife, followed by Younger Elderhood.  
Autumnal Equinox honors Older Elderhood.  
Samhuinn honors Dying and the Ancestors.

ANOTHER RING upon the Circle serves to acknowledge the Four Classes of Gaian Matter. In Tefistry, Gaia is a poetic name for the natural ecosystems of planet Earth. The Gaian Matter we have on planet Earth is:

At North: Lithos, which is any matter that is solid and therefore offers least freedom to our Action, such as Rock  
At West: Hydros, which is any matter that is liquid and therefore offers moderate freedom to our Action, such as Water  
At East: Atmos, which is any matter that is gaseous and therefore offers greatest freedom to our Action, such as Air  
At South: Bios, which is any matter that is organismic and offers mixed freedoms to our Action, such as our own Bodies.

Note: These are classes of Gaian matter. Do not confuse them with the Esoteric Elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water—which are really the names of energies and emotions and spiritual qualities, not really the names of matter. In ritual I do not usually acknowledge the Esoteric Elements, though you may indeed do so; place them on a ring of their own.

AN ANIMAL AND PLANT RING honors key organisms of your choice. The Cors I usually acknowledge on this ring are:

The hibernating Bear (keyed to North, Winter, and Lithos)  
The soaring Hawk (keyed to East, Spring, and Atmos)  
The feeding Elk or Deer (keyed to South, Summer, and Bios)  
The leaping Salmon (keyed to West, Autumn, and Hydros).

These four animals, or similar ones, are commonly honored by Neodruids. Herbs, blossoms, fruits, or trees can also be Cors on this (or another) ring.

THE FINAL RING on my list is the Agricultural Cycle. Discussing this ring last is ironic, for the Celtic Festivals were originally tied directly to the annual cycle of the growing season. Most early Celts were agriculturists (and/or foragers), so their festivals were closely timed to their crops and livestock. But today, few of us are farmers or pastoralists. We may grow a home garden, or we may visit a pumpkin patch at Halloween, but that's about it. However, Tefistry does retain a ring for these traditional agricultural Cors, if only to remember our pre-modern history:

Imbolc and Vernal Equinox: the time of Preparation for the Growing Season

Beltane: the time of Planting, more or less

Summer Solstice and Lughnasa and Autumnal Equinox: the time of Growing and Harvesting

Samhuinn: the time of the Final Harvest

Winter Solstice: the time of nature's Dormancy and of our consumption of the Harvest.

So, all the above rings and their Cors are available to us for the eight stations and their Festivals. We can layer these rings upon the Ceremonial Circle, at least in our hearts and minds. We can choose to honor some or all of them—one-eighth at each Festival—as we journey around the annual cycle. You may well want to add other rings that are important to you. After all, the Ceremonial Circle is an “engine” for your acknowledgement and celebration of Reality.

**May Harmony Prevail, throughout Tef! Love Thy Tef!**