



Good day Worthy Knights

In this part 14, you will see an overview of the ritual of Lustration (Wikipedia).

The candidate performs the Rite of Lustration before entering the conclave.

From the Latin *Lustratio*, purification by sacrifice, any of various processes in ancient Greece and Rome whereby individuals or communities rid themselves of ceremonial impurity (e.g., bloodguilt, pollution incurred by contact with childbirth or with a corpse) or simply of the profane or ordinary state, which made it dangerous to come into contact with sacred rites or objects.

The methods varied from sprinkling with or washing in water, through rubbing with various substances, such as blood or clay, to complicated ceremonies, some of which involved confession of sins. Fumigation was also used.

When a community was to be purified, either from collective guilt or from the accumulated ill luck and ill-doing of a period of time, different processes were used from culture to culture.

The usual Greek method, for instance, seems to have been to lead through the village certain persons or animals capable of absorbing the pollution and then to lead them out of the city.

In Rome, purifying materials were led or carried around the person or community in question. Many noteworthy public rites were of this kind, such as the *Lupercalia* (around the Palatine hill) and the *Amburbium* (around the city).

This procession included in some circumstances the sacrifice of a pig (*sus*), a ram (*ovis*), and a bull (*taurus*) to the deity of Mars (*suovetaurilia*).



One reason for a Lustratio was also to rid newborn children of any harmful spirits that may have been acquired at birth. The ceremony took place when the baby boy reached the age of nine days, or if a girl, eight days old.

In the ceremony, the procession traced a magical boundary around the child to be purified and at the end of the ceremony, if the child was male; he was presented with a small charm, usually of gold, called a bulla and kept in a leather bag around the boy's neck.

This bulla would be worn until the boy became a man and exchanged the child's purple-lined toga praetexta for the plain toga virilis of an adult!

The Lustratio ceremony culminated with the naming of the child, the name being added to official Roman registers, and the observation of a flight of birds in order to discern the child's future.

Lustratio ceremonies were also used to purify cities, objects or buildings, and on some occasions to purify an area where a crime had been committed. One notable occasion was a Lustratio held to purify Athens by Epimenides of Crete, after the Cylonian massacre (note).

Lustratio ceremonies were also used to bless crops, farm animals, new colonies, and armies before going into battle or passing into review.

In the latter case, troops were often ordered to the coastline, where half of the sacrifice would be thrown into the sea and the other half burnt on an altar. An example of this was the army of Macedon. Lustratio was performed by a dog being cut in half, and the army assembling between the location of the two halves, which were flung in opposite directions.

Instructions on the Lustratio performed for the Roman town of Iguvium (Gubbio – Perugia province) illustrate that the ceremony consisted of a procession of priests and sacrificial victims around the town's citadel, stopping at the three gates to the citadel, where the sacrifices took place. The gates were considered as the weak points which required strengthening.

According to Zosimus, the pagan historian of late antiquity, after Constantine the Great had his son Crispus and his own wife Fausta killed, he approached priests of the old religion, and finding that they were unwilling to offer him lustration for these deeds, went over to the Christian religion after theirs offered him absolution.

Note: The Cylonian massacre.

Cylon of Athens, a noble Athenian has been associated with a dramatic failed coup d'état in the history of Athens.

Cylon, a former Olympic champion, sought to rule Athens as a tyrant but Athenians opposed the coup attempt. The city's chief archon, Megacles, had Cylon's supporters massacred in the Temple of Athena, where they sought refuge.

The act was condemned as highly sacrilegious.

Epimenides of Cnossos was a semi-mythical 7th or 6th century BC Greek seer and philosopher.