



# The Final Hours Before the Final Vows

Last night's full moon was a reminder to me of how far we have come in such a short time. As I retreated to my room with laptop under arm to play some meditative music, light a candle, and rest in preparation for the evening ceremonies, I couldn't help but feel a warm sense of satisfaction that, as Mary Chapin Carpenter sings: [everything runs right on time, years of practice and design.](#)

We are now in our third year of the Sisterhood, and by late yesterday, I was already feeling deeply satisfied by [the progress of the Order](#). I was feeling a sense of pride in how everything around the farm seemed to be running right on time.

It was ten after four in the afternoon when I entered [the abbey](#). I noticed how quiet it was, straight off.

Like a mother with her list of children, I couldn't help but do a quick assessment on where all my tribe were at this particular moment. Sister Kassidy was out for two days, preparing to take her vows. That meant her two-year old noisemaker (and I call her that in the nicest way possible) was not here either.

Miss Preslee was the only one working down the hall from the kitchen, quietly absorbed in answering [customer emails](#). Miss Amy and Chef Marilyn were in the kitchen of the blue house prepare the evening feast. Miss Lori was in the office taking my calls and hers, and getting payroll ready. Sister Freya's off-spring wouldn't be arriving for two hours and she was holed up with the stars and the forecasts, preparing her readings.



I knew Miss Preslee's seven-year-old son, Jayden, was kicking a ball around outside in the drizzling rain and that the Brothers were in the shop, tending the plants.

At the time that I walked passed Jayden (after a very long day in the office on conference calls and preparing the songs, speeches and vows for the ceremony), I was intent on just having my tea, resting on my bed and listening to healing music. But when I stepped into the main hall, the visual was so pleasant I had to stop and appreciate it.

The late afternoon sun filtered through the blinds and did a little light show on the polished surface of the big wooden table in the center of the room. The faint smell of our topical salves lingered in the air. Everything was so clean and orderly and peaceful. A sigh of relief that Sister Freya had arranged the abbey. I hadn't intended to linger, as I only had an hour and a half to shower and rest before I must dress for the evening.



I set down my papers and computer and stood admiring the sunlight coming through the blinds, admiring the positioning of the items required for the ceremony. The candelabra at the center of the big wooden table, with half-burned white taper candles in their holes from the last ceremony, but boxes of new white taper candles set nearby the base... new, colored, scented candles in deep glass jars were set about the room – two on the wood-burning stove, two on the wooden chest near the front door, two on the kitchen counter, one on each side of the candelabra. That table is the center place for all our indoor ceremonies, I thought, smiling fondly at the table, and then nodding respectfully to it, as if it has a life of its own. With all the items arranged on and, around it, it seemed so.

Miss Preslee had set out four sets of gloves, four palo santo sticks, and four smudgesticks, all new wicks, new sticks, new gloves.

The only sound in the quiet room was the ticking clock from Karlovac.

I opened the gown closet door and smiled at the four gowns, four bleached and starched bibs, and turning to the table, counted four pressed veils, four caps and four neck-covers hanging individually over the backs of four chairs.

When I emerged from my rooms at half past five, I lit the candles and thanked my lucky stars, and Godfather and Goddess Mother for how far we have come. I recalled that it wasn't so long ago that I was doing the ceremonies alone, under the stars, feeling a bit crazy for doing so.

Two years ago, I did everything, I was the everything. One year ago, it wasn't so, with at least a dozen people around and participating... and though I had [more Sisters and more Brothers](#), I was still doing pretty much everything, but with helpers. I was still doing all the menu planning, most of the cooking, and I was candle-fetcher, music director, sermon-writer, moon-phase researcher. I was garment manager, too, and would sometimes be sewing, pressing, or repairing gowns, bibs or veils up to an hour before the ceremony.



Last night, as I moved from station to station lighting the candles for the coming ceremony, I said a prayer of thanksgiving for the ease with which our full moon events have come to be executed. It isn't just a normal ceremony as there is a feast; there is special cleaning and preparing that must be done, preparing of both the physical and the spiritual. But this time, I didn't do it alone. This time, I didn't even do the majority of it! This time, I got to focus on my part and everyone else focused on their own parts and somehow, we nailed it – with the elegance and grace of professional ballet dancers.

I said a prayer of thanks for Mother Goddess shepherding these women to me, [the right women](#), the right men. I said thanks for the order and the calm. It is, after all, the order that we crave; it is the simplicity of an elegant dance that we all wish to be part of – it is the lack of a need to discuss and over-discuss every little thing. We strive to be like our ancient mothers – less words, more dignified action. Last night's ceremony – and more importantly, the period of twenty-four hours leading up to last night's ceremony – was like a graduating step for the Order. Like a coming-of-age of the Sisterhood. Everyone had a task to do; everyone had a role to fill, and everyone did their thing, elegantly, gracefully, seriously, and excellently. I couldn't be more proud.



February 10, 2017

- Ice Moon / Full Moon
- Celebration of Sister Kassidy Taking Her Final Vows
- Opening Song – #1 Sacred Ancestors
- First Reading – Sister Kate / Pope Joan
- Song – #3 Earth Joy Dance
- Light Sage and Palo Santo Incense
- Song – #5 We Are a Circle
- Second Reading – Sister Freya / The Strength of the Moon
- Light Sage and Palo Santo Incense
- Song – #8 We All Come from the Goddess
- Sister Kassidy Vows & Gifts from the Tribe
- Final Song – #7 I Hear You Calling

Photos by Jaime Riley.