

For the *Celestial Host* Kickstarter <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/stormbunny/design-camp-the-celestial-host>

DESIGN CAMP PRESENTS:



THE FLAME OF MITHRAS

"Fellowship and fidelity in blood and spirit."

Name The Flame of Mithras

Symbol A short-horned bull's head in front of a stylized flame

Alignment LN

Type Mystery Cult

Modifiers (Honor +1, Morale +0, Lore +0, Society +2)

Leaders Pater of the Great Mithraeum in Roma

Membership 100,000+

Locations Roma, Italia (Major Temple), Londinium, Britannia (Temple), Dura Europos, Syria (Small Outpost), Lutetia, Gallia (Small Outpost), & many more

Notable Members General, Gladiator, Senator

Services Offered Acquire Spellcasting, Masterwork Armor & Weapons, Petition Incantations, Postmortem care

Enemies Eastern Cult of Mithras, Illuminated Brotherhood of Hermes Trismegistus

Brought to the Empire by legionnaires returning from campaigns against the Parthians and bolstered through interaction with missionaries passing from Parthia to Thracia, the Flame of Mithras teaches a mystery cult faith which primarily venerates Mithras, and, in a lesser respect, both Ahrimanus and Sol Invictus, or the Unconquered Sun.

While it is a growing cult in the Empire, it does not actively recruit or seek to grow its membership through any means other than simple evangelism by current adherents. It is their belief that the mystery finds you, and not that missionaries should seek converts. Fortunately, it is popular among those in military service, gladiators, and veterans, and the Roman Empire's policy of aggressive expansion means it will remain popular. It is fairly well known and respected in the capital of Roma, home of not only its largest temple but also fifty other mithraeums, as they are called, the largest number of temples in a community.

Over 100,000 individuals claim membership to the Flame of Mithras, although only perhaps 10% have become involved beyond their first initiation and maybe 10% of those progress beyond the third level of initiation. Mithraism is not an alternative to the polytheistic religions of the Empire, but a very popular one among many. Soldiers often join before their legion marches for distant lands, making votive offerings for glory in battle or safe return. A few more devout even establish shrines when their units arrive, creating the small holy places which expand over time

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and through an organic donation of time or materials by local followers. The temples at Dura Europos or Lutetia are examples of these “grown” temples. At least 150 mithraeums publicly exist across the Empire, with larger ones in Londinium, Pons Sarravi in the Rhine, and Old Caesarea in Judaea. Local members volunteer their time as guards, agents, or mystagogues for the Flame, depending on the need. The Pater of the great Roma Mithraeum is often considered the faith’s leader, but he makes no broad pronouncements.

The Eastern Cult of of Mithras considers them heretics and legionnaires captured by Parthians in regions where the Eastern Cult is strong tend to suffer badly, but the might of the Roman government prevents any widescale inter-cult conflict within the Empire. In Aegyptus, the Illuminated Brotherhood of Hermes Trismegistus fervently believes them to be upstart usurpers to their god and his magic, and actively works to sabotage the cult and its membership through social intrigue. During the late 4th Century, another ascendant mystery religion from the Levant actively worked to destroy Mithraism.

The Flame of Mithras provides many services to members. They cooperate to acquire spellcasting for its members at 66% the local rate, utilizing social connections; they offer small caches of masterwork armor and weapons for members for free or reduced rates, but require an oath from the member to return two weapons in gratitude. Casual martial instruction between members is common. Members may petition incantations to be cast by the local congregation, either participating or simply benefiting, and they may arrange postmortem care of either a raise dead effect or proper cremation and burial.

Some famous members include the Emperor Commodus, the philosopher Porphyry, and the writer Euboulus.

Joining the Order

The Flame of Mithras prefers new members to have a martial background, but accepts any members sponsored by existing adherents. People who wish to join the organization are called “aspirants.” Aspirants must be willing to complete the initiations and swear the Oath of Fellowship. Adventuring groups often join together. The Flame of Mithras almost never actively recruits individuals as an organization.

As Background / 1st Level Characters

Those characters who wish to join at first level, or as a part of a background may take the following trait. They may not sponsor any other aspirant’s membership until they initiate the second station of the Flame of Mithras.

Newly created members gain the Raven of Mithras Trait.

Raven of Mithras (Trait)

You have taken the oath of initiation and joined the Flame of Mithras. Through the intercession of your patron, you’ve been granted the use of a temple weapon or received additional teachings.

Benefit You gain a masterwork weapon of your choice. This weapon is held in trust for the Flame of Mithras, and you are dutybound to return or replace it to the Mithraeum where you received it. You gain a +1 bonus to Profession (Soldier) checks. If you ever return the weapon to the

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Mithraeum permanently, or do not wish to borrow a masterwork weapon, you may request instruction on a lesser incantation from one of the temple's mystagogues.

For higher level Characters

Characters who wish to join the Flame of Mithras later in their careers must find a current member initiated in the second station of the mystery to act as their sponsor and patron. Doing so may require a task or test of some type to show the potential patron the aspirant's dedication. This sponsor vouches for the aspirant's moral fiber and often acts as a mentor within the organization. The aspirant must then complete the initiations and swear the Oath of Fellowship.

New members may request further instruction in incantations, martial techniques like feats or other abilities, or even socio-political favors from fellow members, generally through petitioning their patron member or through personal connections they may have with existing members, but more senior members are welcome to decline these requests if time or circumstances do not permit.

A member may request a mystagogue's instruction and initiation to the next station of the mystery from the local Mithraeum's *Pater*. The *Pater* then tests the member's knowledge and assigns them a specific task to demonstrate their faith, which involves enduring some hardship or overcoming some dangerous threat. When this task is adequately completed, a mystagogue proceeds with the instruction. Some tasks may take a great deal of time or investment. Advancement is confirmed by a handshake from the *Pater*, and all members of the Flame of Mithras are syndexioi – “*those united by the handshake.*”

Aspects of Membership

Members of the Flame of Mithras are expected to live a life consistent with the philosophies of Mithras, including an ethos of striving towards self-improvement, fellowship with other believers, and excellence in all aspects of one's life. Brief

prayers are offered to the Sun three times a day, and Sunday is considered their holy day.

Rank and Advancement through the mysteries of the Flame of Mithras are handled through initiation ceremonies. A member is assigned a mystagogue, or teacher, of the next rank in the Flame of Mithras. The mystagogue determines if the member is ready to advance by requiring the member to complete certain sacrifices, oaths, and quests, following in the stories of Mithras. When these tasks have been completed to the mystagogue's satisfaction, an advancement ceremony is performed. There are no written holy texts, the scriptures of the Flame of Mithras are only transmitted orally or represented in sculpture or art.

Ritual Initiations include the Meal of the Sun, the Oath of Fidelity, the Rock Birth, and the Tauroctony or Slaughtering of the Bull. They celebrate holidays on the Summer and Winter Solstice, as well. All celebrations and rituals involve a meal of some kind.

Organizational Structure

The Flame of Mithras has seven levels of initiation. The ranks are:

Raven — These are the lowest members of the Flame of Mithras. They are the rank and file members who do not wish to deeply explore the mysteries, but do want to live as a devotee. **Potential Benefit:** Ravens and all other members of the Flame of Mithras may appeal to their local congregation for help with issues, and generally receive an unspoken discount on goods and services. They are often offered the right of first refusal on tasks and opportunities other members need completed.

Lanternbearer — Those who wish to share the mysteries of Mithras with others and serve as a patron to a new aspirant gain this level. **Potential Benefit:** Lanternbearers gain closer social connections to members of the Soldier rank and greater. They generally are provided social engagements and interactions where they might be introduced to po-

tenial Ravens to serve as mentors by higher ranked mithraists, and enjoy the benefits inherent in such gatherings.

Soldier — This is the lowest level member who can serve as a mystagogue for other members. *Potential Benefit:* Solider-ranked mithraists are usually offered a special *cloak of resistance* as a symbol of their office. This cloak may have been crafted specially for the member (and the member is expected to make a donation equal to its cost), or it may be a gift from a higher ranked member. It may have been invested with greater magical power over time, and it almost always bears some symbolism of the faith and the temple from which it came. Some cloaks have distinct and famous lineages, and bring certain expectations for the bearer by their reputation.

Lion — Dedicated workhorses of the faith, these members coordinate initiations and help manage daily operations of Mithraeums. *Potential Benefit:* Lions are provided greater resources to achieve the temple's needs. They might be given to opportunity to borrow or purchase magical items, to receive magical spellcasting at lower rates or even gratis. Lions might see political benefits or faster promotion within a Watch or the military. Members who achieve this rank most certainly enjoy regular and close interactions with other senior members of the temple, and can easily request assistance when necessary.

Perses — These members are responsible for the proper maintenance of their Mithraeums, and many consider it a sacred duty to their god and fellow congregation. *Potential Benefit:* Perses-ranked mithraists have unfettered access to the temple facilities and grounds, and may request funds to complete goals associated with repairing or constructing the temple facilities. They have a great deal of interaction with craftspeople, guildmembers, and artisans— all of whom might serve as followers, contacts, or resources in the Perses daily activities.

Heliodromus — The scholars and historians of the Flame of Mithras, they maintain the oral traditions and help instruct other members, acting as mystagogues. *Potential Benefit:* Heliodromus have

access to the accumulated knowledge and resources of the local temple, and while they are expected to contribute to that library, they are also expected to be intimately familiar with it, which requires lots of time reading and reviewing the materials. This can provide access to unique spells, lost maps, tomes of rare knowledge. Additionally, Heliodromus-ranked mithraists are often brought items other members suspect to be significant or important, and so they also get to see many items before they might be publicly available.

Both Heliodromus and Perses are offered a special *ring of resistance* as a symbol of their office. This ring may have been crafted specially for the member (and the member is expected to make a donation equal to its cost), or it may be a gift from a higher ranked member. It may have been invested with greater magical power over time, such as being a 'slotless' item, and it almost always bears some symbolism of the faith and the temple from which it came. Some rings have distinct and famous lineages, and bring certain expectations for the bearer by their reputation.

Pater — These are the spiritual leaders of a Mithraeum, although some individuals receive honorary titles, and there may be many Paters in a single Mithraeum. The most senior Pater of a Mithraeum is known as a Pater Patrum, or Father of Fathers. They research initiations, explore the stories of Mithras, and shepherd the faith. *Potential Benefit:* The Paters within a Mithraeum can enjoy the ability to call upon the members of the temple for services, spellcasting, or other activities as necessary for the proper survival of the congregation. This means they have the resources of the temple at their disposal, but Paters who abuse their positions often suffer unpleasant consequences.

The Flame of Mithras may teach several different incantations to worthy members. These include one replicating the effects of a *righteous might* spell when a token is crushed, one providing a magical, glorious crown of Mithras when a specific diadem is worn, and another which acts as a sort of either resurrection-in-waiting or divine retributive lightning which the primary caster might unleash

when the proper conditions are met. All of these incantations are reserved for syndexioi of the Soldier station or greater.

Roleplaying Suggestions

Some story options available to characters participating in the Flame of Mithras include:

Gathering the Greatest Sacrifice

A character's mystagogue hopes to perform a monumental initiation, bringing the character to the level of Lion within the faith in a spectacular manner. However, to properly complete this task, the mentor requires the aspirant to capture and deliver a gorgon to the mithraeum live and unharmed. Additionally, the gorgon is illegal inside the city, and the aspirant must find a way to smuggle it into the community without being caught by the authorities. Once delivered, the gorgon must be kept subdued but pure for its role in the Tauroctony.

To Watch Another's Journey

A fellow member of the local mithraeum wishes to attain the station of Soldier, and has been given a long quest to single-handedly rid a dangerous pilgrimage route of all threats. The player character has been assigned to watch this aspirant's task and ensure no one interferes, and that the aspirant's accepts no assistance from anyone. As the member travels through dangerous lands, the group is charged with preventing well-intentioned assistance and surviving the trip to return and report. This doesn't prevent others from attacking the monitors, but means the character must find ways to redirect such enemies so that the aspiring Soldier can defeat them.

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