

*The 2024 Olympics opening ceremony provoked thoughts on the validity of pagan religion within a Christianity-dominated world.*

2024 Summer Olympics - The Pagan Reaction  
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To some, the 2024 Summer Olympics opening ceremony was an engaging show with a diverse cast of performers but a truly eye-opening and introspective experience for Christians and Pagans alike.

The point I want to focus on is the ability of modern paganism to make spaces to be seen and respected amongst other religions and spiritualities—like at... say, The Olympic Games, especially amongst the global prominence of Christianity. My personal flavour of paganism happens to be the one in question, Hellenic, but there are many cultural varieties all with the same validity.

The Panhellenic Games of Greece were significant religious festivals for conducting shows of valour and skill in honour of the gods above. The Olympic Games, held in Olympia, were the first of four annual celebrations, followed by the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian Games for their respective years. These festivals were pivotal events where worshipers could perform for their god's good fortune. Although the Modern games we have now may not be founded on the religious aspect of ancient times, the performance and strength of our world's athletes are still justified in the gods' favour. Today, within modern Hellenic paganism, our demographics spread much further than the limitations of Greece's borders, encapsulating queer, BIPOC, disabled and all forms of people. Paying homage to the origins of the ancient festival within the bodies of their people is an appropriate justice in acknowledging the gods and the history that founded them. As a spiritual pagan, I was and still am incredibly proud to have been represented in such a way by so many diverse communities on the Olympic stage.

Unfortunately, what was such a graceful and profound moment for Hellenic pagans, was a show of embarrassment for those of Christian faith.

Christian outrage poured into the Olympic scene; that the contributing artists had made a mockery of Christian faith and *The Last Supper*. The famous painting of Jesus and his apostles—might I clarify, is only *one* depiction of a common religious composition, and had ironically been made within the same decade as *The Feast of the Gods* (the actual inspirational painting). What an incredible amount of tunnel vision to watch upon an originally ancient Greek sporting ceremony—where announcers again and again had explained references to the god Dionysus—and think, "*What they're depicting is Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper.*" Then, berate and shame artists for those creative choices. Not only did it show their lack of respect for the presence of drag queens and queer people within performance arts, but also bubbled up dialogues where Christians openly criticized the existence of pagan religion within community and global spaces. Now this is an instance of "Not *all* Christians", for I know of and greatly respect

the many Christians in existence who do not share the complainant's voice. For ease of clarity, though, I will continue to refer to them, as they are the demographic who made these claims.

It is with the commotion of Christian watchers that The Olympic Games' X account announced their true intentions. The man painted blue was meant to portray an interpretation of the Greek God Dionysus, something which had not necessarily occurred to the average viewer. This opened a floodgate for interpretations on the matter, but also a spotlight on modern paganism. We who know and follow the gods respect Dionysus for his central feature in celebrations of any kind, those who might not have understood the reference could have begun with questions or research. The response we saw instead outlined to me the absolute proliferation Christian ideology still has upon greater society.

Certainly, within 2024, there must be an understanding that many different people can respectively hold many differing religious beliefs.  
Perhaps not.

I want to encourage the continued awareness of pagan religions while also combatting the socio-theological domination of any faith. I hope that the continued representations of paganism can cultivate support and increased education on wider spectrums of religion. Perhaps if we can achieve that, Christians, and those of dominant faith, will *keep* their eyes open to us minor league, maybe someday see us as equals.