

The Virtues of Chivalry

COURAGE

In the medieval view, courage was one of the most important knightly virtues. Understand that courage is in no way limited to fighting. Courage is keeping your head in any emergency. Courage is the caregiver helping a person with a contagious disease. Courage is facing scorn and ridicule for what you believe is right.

HONOR

Honor and Honesty are and always have been tied together with bonds that cannot be broken. Indeed Honesty and Honor are from the same root word (Latin, Honus) and a man who would have Honor must have Honesty. In a world of ideal chivalry a man's word is his bond. This is as it should be. All people should guard against swearing lightly, as what is sworn must be done.

LOYALTY

Of course, all Knights in the Renaissance owe fealty to the Crown. Loyalty can also mean defending or helping someone to whom you are not sworn, but to whom you owe your help. A Knight should always work for the good of the Kingdom.

GENEROSITY

Certainly a Knight should "holde open table" and show largess toward heralds, minstrels and workers. The more difficult and more vital part of the virtue of generosity in today's world, however, is not in being generous with goods or with praise, but being generous in giving the benefit of the doubt to your opponent. If you must speak on the issue, ask gently and keep an open mind.

FAITH

Faith was a cornerstone of Knighthood in the middle Ages and the Renaissance. Of course in those days in Europe Faith meant the Christian faith. Now we don't demand that all ascribe to the same religion, but faith has its place. The Faith a Knight of our ideal world must have is the belief in the validity and importance of these virtues. A Knight should believe in the inherent nobility of all people.

COURTESY

Courtesy is the lubricant, the oil that keeps a civilized society running smoothly. We expect everyone to display Courtesy. There are two great threats to courtesy. Those are thoughtlessness and reaction to discourtesy, real or perceived. Guard well against speech without thought, for it is far too easy to give offense with a tossed off word. The true test of courtesy comes in attempting courtesy in the face of discourtesy. Remember that someone else's poor behavior is no reason for you to respond in kind. To do so would only reduce your virtue. Try to see instances of discourtesy as an opportunity to test and show your virtue. He who successfully shows the grace under pressure of courtesy in the face of discourtesy is truly noble.

This concludes our list of Chivalric Virtues and leads us into the warning that I would give all those who are upon a Chivalric Path. Our greatest danger is Vainglory. It lurks behind virtues and glory. Beware excessive Pride; for it is a failing to which we are all open.

Thus I charge you to always hold your pride in check with humility, to always seek honor over glory, and to always do honor unto your Inspiration. We further quote Lull:

"For honour is more worth than gold or sylver withoute any comparyson."

Thanks to John Chamberlain, aka SCA Count Sir Garick von Kopke although much changed and abridged by yours truly Jay the pathfinder, Jay Lynch.

Find us, Burnt Mountain Crafts, at Rentoys.com.