

## Chivalry

The orders of the Commandery within the York Rite are called the “Chivalric Orders” but what does that mean? As members of a Chivalric order. What are your ideas as to what that means?

“Chivalrous” is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as: Valiant; of, relating to, or characteristic of Chivalry and Knight-errantry; marked by honor, generosity, and courtesy; marked by gracious courtesy and high-minded consideration towards Women. None of these descriptions should be that surprising when thinking about medieval knights or Knights Templar. Chivalry is usually one of the first things to come to mind when someone mentions Knights or Medieval history.

One of my favorite examples of Chivalrous behavior is from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. If you have not read this Poem, I highly urge each to read it. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Gawain is beset by many trials and tribulations on his quest to honor a pledge made with the Green Knight. A brief synopsis of the story is as follows. A Green Knight shows up to King Arthurs court and challenges him to a game of chopping off each other’s head. As part of this game, the Green Knight tells him that one year hence he must appear to him at his Chapel and there have his head chopped off in return. Sir Gawain shows great friendship by standing in and agreeing to this to save King Arthur the dignity. Sir Gawain accepts and cuts off the head of the Green Knight. One year later, to honor his pledge, he sets off to the Chapel of the Green Knight. Along his way he is tested by the five virtues of Knights: friendship, generosity, piety, chastity, and courtesy. As part of this he is rewarded with a Girdle that will protect him against all harm. When he finally reaches the Chapel and submits to the Green Knight to have his head chopped off, the Green Knight spares him as he knows about all of the trials and Sir Gawain’s sincere behavior in all his dealings despite Sir Gawain being dishonest by having the girdle, the Green Knight realized it was only because of his love of his life that Sir Gawain was dishonest and only nicks his neck. I bring this example forward to illustrate not a perfect example of what it is to be Chivalrous, for if Sir Gawain had been perfect, he would not have lied about the girdle.

I bring this up to show how even one who is sincere in everything he does can stumble. These ideals are to be striven to achieve in all things. As we are reminded in our closing Charge, we are to remind in the most tender

manner of their failings and aid in their reformation. We all stumble and err from time to time. By applying this teaching, we are practicing the virtues of Courtesy and Friendship. By donating your time or money to our various charities we are practicing generosity. We can practice Piety by being devout in our beliefs and sharing the gospel in the world. And we can practice Chastity by also practicing one of our 4 cardinal virtues: Temperence.

We should apply those Chivalric values as taught in our orders and exemplified by Sir Gawain towards ourselves, each other, and the world. We should all try to live up to the ideals of Chivalry as they are intimately tied with the virtues of Masonry. I have heard it said that the York Rite are a bunch of guys with silly hats cosplaying. I put it to all of you not to play as Knights, but to be Knightly, that is, to be Chivalrous towards all mankind.

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