

# Vigil for the Order of Defense

I have come to address you, concerning certain aspects of the peerage you are about to enter. Many may say it is an honor to be made a *Master/Mistress* of Defense, and it is surely that. But it is more than that: it is a heavy responsibility that you take upon yourself, not in gladness, but with sobriety and sincerity.

As a *Master/Mistress* of Defense, all eyes will be upon you, and your words and deeds will reflect upon your Order, your Kingdom, and the entire rapier community. Both on and off the field, your honor and theirs will be as one.

Every Peer must have qualities that are worthy of renown. And every Order of Peerage, though it has qualities marked as its own, shares elements of those qualities with the other Orders of Peerage.

For the Order of the Pelican is marked for its outstanding service. But a *Master/Mistress* of Defense likewise has the responsibility of service, performing to the best of their ability. A *Master/Mistress* of Defense must want to do good works, must be willing to do them, and will do them more frequently and more extensively than their friends who are not Peers.

And the Order of the Laurel is noted for artistry and scholarship. But a *Master/Mistress* of Defense, as a Peer of the Realm, is expected to have knowledge of martial prowess and period combat. Rightly or wrongly, a *Master/Mistress* of Defense will be taken as an authority, whose words carry considerable weight; and this will be a heavy burden on you.

And the Order of Chivalry is known for the knightly virtues: courage, humility, self-sacrifice and valor. But equally chivalrous behavior will be expected of you: as a Peer of the Realm, you must endeavor to live, as you have until now, by the rules of courtoisie, or of gentle behavior.

You will be made a *Master/Mistress* of Defense. The Order of Defense, in its embrace of the martial art of the rapier, looks to the Code Duello for its qualities: The quality of vision, to see the strengths of those you encounter, on the field or off it. The quality of quickness, both with the rapier and with the mind and wit. The quality of daring, with the courage to accept challenges and defy injustice. And the quality of fortitude, to endure and persevere through all trials.

This, then, will be the Code that must rule your conduct as a Peer: to be gracious and gallant always, to deal justly and fairly with all, to be an example of gentle behavior to whom others can look, letting honor be your guide.

To accept elevation to the Order of Defense is to accept these new responsibilities. I pray you keep these words in your heart, as you prepare for your new status.