

# Vigil for the Order of the Laurel

I have come to address you, concerning certain aspects of the peerage you are about to enter. Many say it is an honor to be made a Master or Mistress of the Laurel, 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. The oath you will soon swear will bind you in fealty to Crown and Kingdom, a fealty to be renewed with each reign; and it is meet and right to understand well what you are about to promise.

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.

The Order of Chivalry is known for the knightly virtues: courage, humility, self-sacrifice and valor. But no less 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. This courtly ideal is your guide in your conduct with others: to deal with them justly and fairly, regardless of station, to be gracious and courteous to all, to be an example to whom others can look.

The Order of the Pelican is marked for its outstanding service. But a *Master/Mistress* of the Laurel likewise has the responsibility of service, performing to the best of their ability and then -- and then -- to that point of performance where sacrifice is required. A Laurel 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 Laurels.

The Order of Defense, in its embrace of the martial art of the rapier, looks to the Code Duello for its qualities: vision, quickness, daring, and fortitude, to endure and persevere through all trials. But no less foresight, audacity, or endurance will be expected of you as a Master/Mistress of the Laurel. You must be gracious and gallant always, letting honor be your guide.

The Order of the Laurel is the order most noted for artistry and scholarship. Other Peers of the Realm are expected to have some small measure of talent or skill. But a Laurel exemplifies this artistic talent to a degree greater than that of the other peers and greater still than that of the populace at large. Rightly or wrongly, a Laurel is taken as an authority, whose words carry considerable weight; and this will be a heavy burden on you.

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