

The Age of Knights

Code of Chivalry

In the early 1900's, Leon Gautier, a French scholar who had devoted his life to the study of the literature of chivalry, assembled what he called the Ten Commandments of Knighthood.

They required:

1. Unswerving belief in the Church and obedience to her teachings
2. Willingness to defend the Church.
3. Respect and pity for all weakness and steadfastness in defending them.
4. Love of country
5. Refusal to retreat before the enemy.
6. Unceasing and merciless war against the infidel.
7. Strict obedience to the feudal overlord, so long as those duties did not conflict with the duty to God.
8. Loyalty to truth and to the pledged word.
9. Generosity in giving.
10. Championship of the right and the good, in every place and at all times, against the forces of evil.

Knight's Prayer

Carved in the stone of Chartres Cathedral, France is a knightly prayer:

“Most Holy Lord, Almighty Father... Thou who has permitted on earth the use of the sword to repress the malice of the wicked and defend justice... cause Thy servant before Thee, by disposing his heart to goodness, never to use this sword or another, to injure anyone unjustly; but let him use it always to defend the just and right.”

Rites of Knighthood

1. Bath – symbolic act of purification
2. Clothing – a white linen robe, scarlet mantle and black doublet, symbolic of innocence, self-sacrifice and death, respectively.
3. Fast for twenty-four hours.
4. All night vigil in the chapel.
5. Confession, Mass, and sermon
6. Blessing of the sword.
7. Taking of vows
8. Investiture with armor, spurs and sword
9. The accolade, delivered by another knight as a light hand blow or as a sword slap on each shoulder accompanied by the words “ Be thou a knight”.
10. Participation in jousts and foot combats.

References:

The Knight and Chivalry, Richard Barber

Chivalry, Michael Foss

The Age of Chivalry, The National Geographic Society

A Dictionary of Chivalry, Grant Uden