**The Code of Chivalry**

By Sir Blackwolf

**Prowess –** To do the best one can do in all things in accordance with one’s ability. It matters not what the task may be. For anything that knights set themselves to doing, must be accomplished with the utmost attention to detail, concern for timeliness, and completed with a high regard for excellence. A knight is not expected to be an expert in all things. However to do less than one is capable of demeans not only one’s self, but also the task at hand. No task is too menial for a knight, for are we not servants? It is not our place to be treated with reverence and deference. Ours is a humble station and we must never forget that once we kneel and accept the accolade of knighthood, we spend the rest of our lives in humility. The knight is ever the first to step forward and accept the task, and ever is he or she the last to withdraw once the task is accomplished.

**Justice –** The knight must ever be upon the side which is right. The pathway of Right is not always the pathway of that which is popular or easy. In fact it is ever the difficult rock strewn path that causes many to stumble upon its course. A knight must consider, what is right? Most small children know instinctively what is right and wrong. Search your feelings, do not fall prey to convenience, know that which must be done and do it. Justice is often a matter of perspective. I once saw several crows chase a fox. Who was right and who was wrong? Was it the crows defending their nests, or the fox providing a meal for her kits? Mercy must go hand in hand with Justice. Justice can be cold and cruel with no regard for those she judges. Mercy is the warmth and heart that must bring balance to the knight’s duty of defending Right.

**Loyalty –** The word of a knight must be given wisely, sparingly and unwavering. Fealty and oath are the knight’s stock and trade. Ever must the knight stand before and beside those he or she has sworn allegiance to. The knight that switches sides for the increase of his or her own renown is a knight that cannot be trusted by either friend or foe.

**Defense –** A knight will ever be the shield of the defenseless, the oppressed and of those in need. For a knight is seen as a beacon of light in the darkness of threat, prejudice, and malice. A knight should give only minor concern to his or her pride or welfare. The safety and well being of their charges takes all priority.

**Courage –** The knight that says, “I fear nothing” is a knight to be feared. For this knight cares nothing for others and is deceiving not only those he or she serves, but themselves as well. The breadth of a hair separates the ranks of the brave and the foolish. The brave have discovered the secret of Courage. By allowing one’s self to fail, then one shall surely succeed. Many knights feel they are unworthy of the rank of knight because they have made mistakes or failed in their tasks. No one is perfect. It is only when we surrender, that failure and defeat are complete.

**Faith –** This is the foundation of the knight, the castle walls that defend the knight from despair and disappointment in their fellow man. For as much as we that follow this Way espouse the virtues of the Code. There are those who disdain and revile it as weakness and foolishness. It does not matter what Faith the knight reveres, as long as it is in keeping with the values of the Code. For in the Code can be found the similarities of these Faiths that bind us together as Brothers and Sisters.

**Courtesy –** A knight must be courteous and use good manners to all. This sets an example for others to emulate. A knight should be fearless in the face of their adversary; however there is no need for one’s manner to be crude. Likewise with women and children be kind and gentle. Show respect and therein shall respect be returned unto you, but be not so foolish to think that respect is your due.

**Humility –** So often the loud ones, the flashy ones, the braggers and boasters are hailed as Hero, Champion, and Victor! These are the ones the masses throng to, venerate and adore. A knight true in the Way cares not for such foolishness. The actions and deeds of the knight speak for themselves. The real knight is the one behind the scenes, seen yet not seen. Doing that which needs doing and then fades away as if mist. The knight does not seek riches in rewards, unless the relief of a burden or the laughter of children can be considered gold.

**Dignity –** A knight seeks calmness and composure in word and deed, the self-assurance and confidence that gives one grace. Not arrogance or the false pride of self-importance. The manner of carrying one’s self will often be the difference between conflict and resolution. To be sure, a knight’s conduct and appearance will reassure either their friends or their foes.

**Compassion –** A knight should not be cold or callous to those in need. Nor should a foe be treated unkindly once defeated. All should be treated as one would wish to be treated in similar circumstances. Not all are as fortunate as others and we must think of the needs and situations of those we serve before our own.

**Generosity –** A knight should be giving, of one’s wealth, of one’s talents and most of all, of one’s self. There is no need to pauper one’s self. In fact being over generous to some people creates over dependency. While we should all need and rely on one another, we should maintain our self-reliance. Be generous with your funds and talents; yet balance this with taking care of your own needs and responsibilities to family. Through our service to others we serve that which we revere as Divine. There is no greater gift.

**Duty -** A knight must do these things each and every day until the end of days. There is no separation between our lives as a knight and our more mundane existence. The virtues of the Code are not chosen at the time of their convenience and then ignored when they no longer suit us. The Code is a way of life. It becomes The Way of Life at the very moment we take up this path. Not when we are knighted, but the day we say “I will strive to become a knight”. To be a knight is to take up a most difficult lifestyle. Many have tried, many have failed, and the choice is yours alone. Yet do not despair for you are not alone. There are others who struggle in Valour and swear their Loyalty to you, the Brethren of the Code.

**A Lady’s Role in Chivalry**

The Knight in shining armor was expected to ride about the land doing good deeds, upholding the law and championing the weak and defenseless. In order to make the Code of Chivalry work, his Lady played an important and active part in it as well. The Lady of the Knight’s job was to acknowledge the good and virtuous works which were being done by the Knight, to praise him for being brave, just and courteous. By doing these things she guided him along the Path of Chivalry rather than allowing him to stray into the realm of pride, vanity and selfishness.

 When the turmoil of the early Crusades had diminished and knights began to spend less time upon the battlefield, women increasingly provided the focus for their attentions. A state of relative military calm coupled with the rise of the troubadours, poets that sang of the virtues of Chivalry, dictated that the feminine graces were no longer overlooked. Soon women exerted a power over the knight as powerful as his religion. The highest glory that any knight could attain was to be worthy of the love of the Lady he desired. To this end the most impressive acts of valor were performed in her honor. In his Lady’s name a knight waged war or participated in tournaments to win her favor.

 A Lady is the intellectual custodian of Knightly Virtues. She is responsible for maintaining and promoting the ideals of Chivalry. She is also the balance, the fulcrum between the woman and the warrior. A Lady is first and foremost a woman and as such she is the keeper of the hearth flame that provides a safe nurturing environment for her family. She is the teacher of her children and Lady for her Lord. The Lady has the courage to do those daily tasks that while they are unglamorous, they are also so vital to the well being of her family, and she does them graciously. She is an example to her family and the keeper of peace. She is generous to others while also being generous to herself. She keeps her word no matter the difficulty in fulfilling her vow, and she stands fast in her beliefs. She selflessly serves her Lord, her family and those she believes worthy.

 The Lady of the Knight is the guiding light of Chivalry. As the home evolved it became the center of social interaction, promoting the civilizing arts of music, poetry, painting and sculpture. To please their Lady the Knight will labor to master these arts as intensely as he labors to master the art of warfare. Writing poetry, singing love songs and playing musical instruments then are as important as his skill with sword, lance and bow.

 The Lady has other duties as well, for example she is in charge of the Castle kitchens and oversees the preparation of meals. She commands an army of her own. At her disposal are the staff and stewards that keep a Castle in order. Also she is in charge of the entertainments for visitors and guests that arrive throughout the year. In the absence of her Lord she takes care of managing the jobs normally done by the Knight and his men, to include defending the Keep against siege or leading the army on the field of battle. As a warrior the Lady has to have the strength and determination to make her way in a man’s world. She is willing to get her hands dirty and make sacrifices when needed. Sometimes she has to bide her time when conditions are less than favorable until the time to take action is at hand. Then she does so without hesitation or fear. She must be hard when necessary and merciful when she is able, but she is always and forevermore a Lady.