

Ritual Excellence is for Everyone!

"Dad" Thomas R. Labagh, Executive Officer

Ritual (the set of formal ceremonies through which we conduct our business and receive new members) is the one aspect of DeMolay that ***makes us truly different*** from any other youth organization. It is that part of our Order which ties us most closely to the Masons who sponsor us. It is the method by which our young members test their public speaking skills, develop confidence, and learn the lessons of our seven cardinal virtues, and ultimately, view themselves as heirs to the heroic legacy of Jacques DeMolay.

Sometimes, though, local Chapter ritual isn't all it's cracked up to be. If you ask why, you might hear a lot of excuses. But ultimately, any Chapter that sets its mind to it is capable of ***EXCELLENCE*** in Ritual. Below are some of the "excuses" you'll sometimes hear for poor ritual performance, along with some suggestions that might help you and your Chapter overcome that road block:

"We don't have enough members to do the ritual."

- Ask another Chapter, or State Officers, or a Deputy Executive Officer for help.
- Improvise, to get as much of the work done by the members as possible. Nobody likes to see the Ritual work read from a book, but if that is necessary to cover other parts, make sure that it is at least read properly.
- Obligate your candidates, and take them to another Chapter to see the full degrees. (But make sure the "Obligating" ceremony is done with the same dignity as the degrees should be done.)

"We don't have any candidates, so we can't do degrees."

- There is still the need to confer the degrees, as it is one of the promises a Master Councilor makes in public, and is required if he is to receive a PMC Jewel or Pin from the Chapter.
- Continued practice on the degrees will keep you prepared to handle new members when the time comes.
- This is still the way we teach public speaking skills-don't cheat your members of this great skill-building experience!
- "There's nobody in our Chapter who can teach us how to do the ritual."
- Look around - there are members, State Officers, Advisors, Parents, even Mom's are now acting as Ritual Advisors and instructors. If you can read the instructions, you can teach the Ritual.
- Even better-attend a Ritual Judge's Training Seminar and become a Certified Degree Judge. Whether you ever serve as a judge or not, you will be better trained to understand and teach Ritual in your Chapter after taking this course.

"Our members just don't WANT to do ritual."

- Find out: Is this really the case, or is it just one or two vocal members or Advisors who are saying this?

- Motivate them-trade off a ritual rehearsal for an activity they want to do.
- Offer special refreshments for those who perform their parts from memory.
- Make being a member of the ritual "team" as important as the basketball or volleyball or softball "team."
- Give members the chance to find out if they really do like to perform ... they (and you) might be surprised!

Watch for the difference as you begin to pursue excellence in ritual-few people want to be part of a shoddy show, but many will be motivated to participate when your Chapter ritual is excellent.

EXCELLENCE?

Some Chapters don't do Ritual because they feel they can't do it well enough. Chances are, they're comparing to a standard of ***PERFECTION***, instead of ***EXCELLENCE***.

What's the difference? Simple: Perfection demands that everything be done absolutely right, every time, by every person. Not too realistic. Excellence, on the other hand, means performing ***at your best*** for your ***current level of development***, with the ***resources you have***, and ***in the time available***.

If you're a brand new DeMolay who's never seen an opening ceremony, and you get a call 24 hours in advance to be Chaplain in your home Chapter, you probably won't do as well as the guy who has been the TOC Chaplain Champion for the last three years running. On the other hand, you can be just as ***EXCELLENT*** as him, if you apply yourself to doing the best you can with your experience and limited time. Maybe that means practicing reading the part aloud until you are satisfied that it sounds smooth and natural, and deciding to commit the part to memory as soon as possible so you can be ready for next time!

No Chapter does the Ritual perfectly. ***But anyone-THAT MEANS YOU!- can perform ritual with excellence.***