

Beta Sigma Phi MASTER RITUAL

Instructions: *The Ritual; Table is set with a white cloth and the six colors of candles, as for the Ritual of Jewels ceremony — red, yellow, blue, orange, green and violet. There are three Officiants behind the table. Two of the Officiants hold a white candle to provide light for the Officiant who is reading at the time. As Officiants change, the candles are passed from one to another. The room is darkened before the candidates enter. The candles on the table and in the hands of the Officiants are lighted before the candidates enter.*

First Officiant: Sisters in Beta Sigma Phi, many years ago you began a journey. When you pledged yourself to Beta Sigma Phi, you started a pathway which was lighted by a torch and which led you through friendship and learning toward the fulfillment of your life. Though you continued the journey in the company of your sisters, it was your one special, unique life goal toward which you journeyed.

You have been strong and steadfast through the years of that journey. Along the way you have learned that there is an art of living. You have learned that you can create your own masterpiece, using for your palette our colors of red for Courage, yellow for Vision, blue for Humility, orange for Loyalty, green for Fellowship, and violet for Service. Just as every great artist and craftsman was apprenticed in his art, you have been apprenticed in the art of living. Every great artist comes at some point in this life to a peak of skill and creativity which is recognized by the title "Master," and most artists achieve this status with the creation of what is known as their masterpiece. Still, the masters carry on, creating even greater beauty. The masterpiece is succeeded by wonderful works; some equalling and some bettering the masterpiece.

Your life like that. You have by now created the Great Picture, the form and color are there. The central work of your art was established, and now you add other creations which amplify and expand the scope and depth of your life. And so it will be as long as you live, and as long as you continue to learn and grow. Achieving mastery is not a pinnacle from which every direction is a possible course. It is ability, imagination and desire fused into purpose. Your mastery is not a completion, but a challenge. It means nothing if it is not used. The world, having recognized a master through her work, may thereafter accept and acclaim her least effort. But you can never again accept less than your best. From knowledge and experience and understanding of your own talents you can choose more wisely those efforts to which you will bend your talents; but having chosen, nothing less than your best efforts and your greatest commitment will satisfy you.

The First Officiant, who has been standing in the center, exchanges the Ritual Book for the candle with the Officiant on her right, and the Second Officiant now proceeds.

Second Officiant: Sister, there is in candlelight surrounded by darkness a continuity which began when mankind first learned to control fire. Down through the ages, this early gift to man has persisted in both its destructive and its helpful and useful forms. Down through those same ages, mankind has written, by that light, its history, both good and bad. The need of people to group together for common purposes began very early in the journey through the ages. Your membership as an individual Beta Sigma Phi is a natural extension of that continuity. It grows out of the need to express the best that is in us, and to concentrate on the good, the true and the beautiful. To concentrate upon them not as objects of study and appreciation, but as living principles by which we build out lives.

Time is eternal. The day ends that it may dawn again, and each day is ours to use. Each life, although it is separate and unique, touches the life before it and the life that comes after it in an unbroken stream from the very beginning of time. You are the beneficiary of all that has gone before. You stand at this point in time as the heir to all the fortunes of knowledge, goodness, beauty and truth that mankind has amassed. They are yours to use in your life. They were passed on to you as you apprenticed yourself to life, and you increased and perfected them as you created your masterpiece. And you must hand them on, made better and grander, polished and perfected by your usage. You must return them to the stream of time, using them again and again for your own betterment and the betterment of your world as you follow your goals and purposes. They are yours to use and yours to give, and they will be the inheritance upon which future lives are built and with which future masterpieces are created.

Life does not stand still. Light radiates in every direction and will travel in a straight line forever, even to the stars. The candlelight we see tonight is a continuation of the fire that was kindled so long ago, and your life at this moment is a continuation of the stream of life that began when the world was young and will go on ahead of you forever. There is much before you; it is your privilege to carry on in the unbroken continuation of life. Out of the darkness came the light, and the light shall not go out forever.

The Second Officiant exchanges the Ritual Book for the candle of the Officiant on her left. The Third Officiant takes her place in the center and proceeds.

Third Officiant: The color in the Beta Sigma Phi spectrum is red, and it represents courage. It is natural that courage should be the first named of the virtues. It is that

virtue which underlies all others and makes them possible. Without courage, nothing is possible, and with courage, everything can be possible. Courage and faith are closely related. Courage is impossible without faith and the demonstration of faith is impossible without courage.

Courage was required of mankind before the gentler virtues could be known. Before there was sufficient intellect for vision, there was courage. Before the ability to reflect made humility possible, there was courage. And before loyalty could be established, courage to display it was needed. The strength to open one's experience to other people in fellowship requires courage and the determination to be always useful requires great courage. All these virtues you have demonstrated. Now let the red ray of courage fuse those virtues in to a way of being, a way that is represented by the white light of the colors combined.

When you are just beginning on the path of life, it requires courage to look ahead. But there is little to lose. When you have invested many years in life and great effort and great love, there is much to lose. It requires courage to risk all that you have built by going forward. Yet, you never leave and can never lose those things in which you have invested the most. Perhaps it will require courage to avoid simply resting on your laurels. But to go ahead is the only possible way of reaping what you have sown, of receiving the dividends of your investment. You can't turn back, and you cannot rest for very long in the same place without losing the value of what you have already invested. It is courage through which you realize these things, and welcome the future.

Courage does not speak of the heroic effort, but of the unwavering welcome with which you meet the opportunities of the day. It is the quiet certainty that you will give your best and that you will push on undaunted toward the light of the torch. This day is but a way-stop on your journey. You have

become a Master of the art of living. You have found the courage to carry you on.

The candle is returned to the First Officiant, who returns to the center and competes the Ritual.

First Officiant: Sisters, you have been found worthy and may now accept the challenge offered you as a Master of Beta Sigma Phi to continue the courageous use of all the talents and of all the virtues that you have mastered and to carry on in the light. Will you accept the challenge?

Answer, "I will."

You will now be known as Master of Beta Sigma Phi; an honor which you have earned and must keep earning day by day.

The Officiants now extinguish the white candles and come around the table to congratulate each candidate in turn. Other members in attendance will follow the Officiants to extend their congratulations.