

A Knight's Vigil

In the Middle Ages, an elaborate ceremony surrounded the conferring of knighthood. After certain rites had been performed, the candidate was conducted into his lord's chapel, where he was told to keep a vigil until sunrise. He was to pass the night by "bestowing himself in visions and prayer."

This ritual was captured by artist John Pettie in a painting he entitled *The Vigil*. In it, a young armor-clad knight is seen kneeling before an altar. The light of dawn illuminates the dim aisles of the chapel behind him, but the knight doesn't seem to notice that his vigil is over. His noble but weary young face is still turned to the altar. His eyes have the look of one who has meditated at length on divine and holy things. His helmet and armor are laid on the steps leading to the altar, but he holds his sword in front of him. Its silhouette makes the form of a cross.

What is it that compels you to keep a vigil of prayer or meditation? Are you holding the cross before you?

It is the cross that speaks to us of complete surrender to God's will, and compels us to follow Christ wherever He leads.

It is the cross that unites us to God.

O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. Matthew 26:39.

--Beecher Hunter