

Beta Sigma Phi

LAUREATE RITUAL

Instructions: *The Ritual Table is set with a white cloth and the colored candles, as for the Ritual of Jewels ceremony. There are two empty candle holders to be used later for the Officials' candles. There are three Officials behind the table. Officials may be any member, preferably who holds the Laureate Degree or higher. Two of the Officials hold a white candle to provide light for the Official who is reading at the time. As Officials change, the candles are passed from one to another. The room is darkened before the candidates enter, with only the candles on the table and in the hands of the Officials lighted before the candidates enter. Also arranged on the table are a simple wreath of greenery for each candidate to represent a crown of laurels, with the Laureate Pin for each candidate placed in the center of the wreath. You may substitute yellow roses for a wreath if necessary.*

First Official: Sisters in Beta Sigma Phi, though you have come here together, you have come by diverse ways. Each of you has spent many years in the journey to this place and this moment in time. Though your directions have been the same, your pathways have been several. They have touched and joined, and they have run side by side; but each of you walks in your own unique pathway to reach that goal in life which is uniquely yours. There is not just one way to be a Beta Sigma Phi, but the search for the good, the true, and the beautiful makes of all possible ways a unity which is recognizably Beta Sigma Phi.

It is the way to which all your sisters have committed themselves. In your early years as a member, you have shared completely with your sisters concentration upon the ideals of your organization and upon enrichment of all your lives. You built a foundation of understanding and love upon which the structure of a success-

ful and happy life could rest. And you progressed together. As a Preceptor member, you have maintained your unity with your sisters while concentrating by your own choice upon each of the six virtues inherent, bringing each of them to a fuller and deeper meaning in your own life. That quest will never end.

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

Second Officiant: There is a continuity of life which from very early times has shown progress. Mankind has progressed from the first glimmerings of understanding to finer and greater realizations of life's promise. There have been dark times and setbacks, but the progress has always been picked up and carried forward. Your own journey through life is like that, with dark times and plateaus succeeded by renewed growth and higher achievement.

Your friends in Beta Sigma Phi have traveled the way with you and helped to mold and polish your life. You have had in addition to them six unseen companions, each one carrying a light to guide your feet and direct your understanding. On your right hand have walked Courage, Vision, and Humility, and on your left, Loyalty, Fellowship and Service. Their lights of red, yellow, blue, orange, green and violet have shined through the prism of your life to direct on the path ahead of you a clear white light which not only lights your own way, but serves as a beacon for others. In the years of your progress through Beta Sigma Phi there have been times when each ray of color shone more brightly as its virtue was needed in the building of your living masterpiece. There have been times when Courage was needed to enable you to carry on at all. At times the need for Vision to see beyond obscuring mists and recognize the straight and narrow path was desperately required. The blue light of Humility must shine often in all our lives.

It reminds us that we could not find our way alone. The orange light of Loyalty is a constant brightly glowing flame at which we warm ourselves and which we feed to sustain our companions. The green light of Fellowship which reminds us always that we are not alone shines brightly in Beta Sigma Phi. The soft and delicate violet of Service illuminates the good we do, but is not garish to proclaim our deeds before the world.

You have taken to your heart each of these virtues in turn. You can never desert them, and they will never desert you. With these companions you can go through life rising to greater and greater heights and never be in fear of failing. Whatever obstacles appear in your path you will overcome. In dark times their light will show the way, and in the better times they will remind you of how you have come to your present state. You must live your life so that the great white light shining from you is a perfect reflection of all those colors, tending each of them carefully so that the light will never fail and its quality may be always pure.

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: Throughout all the ages people have found special symbols to recognize attainment, position or achievement. Some visual sign has existed to set apart a leader, a warrior, a fool, a priest, a nurse, or a scholar. Each profession and trade has its sign and every position of leadership is represented in some way by some symbol. The queenly crown tells instantly of its wearer's nobility and high place, but there is a symbol more universal than any other. It is a symbol appropriate to any profession or any calling, and it has its origin in the very beginnings of recorded history. It is the laurel wreath.

The importance of this symbol is not in specific recognition of any single attribute or attainment. The idea for which it stands can be achieved in any field and in the all embracing field of life itself. The laurel wreath is a symbol of honor.

While the laurel wreath may be placed upon you, honor can never be conferred upon you. It must be earned. Only you by attainment and achievement and devotion to the principles which make an art of living can earn for yourself honor. High deeds and noble ambitions of others may influence your life, but their honor can never be yours and your honor can never be theirs. The honor to which you are entitled is distinctive. Though each of you is to be honored for her achievements in life and in Beta Sigma Phi, those achievements are solely yours and unlike those of even friends and sisters who are closest to you. You are to be honored for all that you have become and for the promise of what you yet will be. For there is no highest distinction and ahead of you lie days and years to use for greater and greater achievement. Upon those who deserve to be honored their laurels rest, not they upon their laurels.

Those who have received the laurel wreath of honor are known as Laureates. As the poet laureate makes the song of his country, the Preceptor laureate carries the lessons of her living. Displayed before us are laurel wreaths. Soon each of you will be crowned, recognizing the honor you have earned for yourself and the pride each of us holds for your achievements. This laurel crown carries with it not privilege, but responsibility. It does not lift from you the requirement to progress and achievement, but recognizes your proven ability to go forward. There are other laurels and other honors which lie ahead, and you have the light to see the way.

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

First Officiant: Sisters, you have been found worthy of a signal honor and may now accept the responsibility of keeping bright and fresh the laurels with which your achievements are recognized by practicing ever more intently and with ever greater devotion all that is beautiful, good, and true. Will you accept that responsibility?

Answer, "I will."

We place upon each of you now the laurel wreath significant of the esteem and honor in which you are held by your sisters and present to you your Laureate pin which will represent that laurel wreath. It's color is dark green, signifying the color of the laurel and the green of Fellowship which has accompanied you since your first days in Beta Sigma Phi. The pin embodies all the significance that has been a part of your experience since you received the Ritual of Jewels, only the meaning of its color has changed.

The Second and Third Officiants place their candles in holders and move to the front of the table and starting at each end of the line of candidate's place a laurel wreath on each candidate's head, presenting to her at the same time her Laureate pin. When all the laurel wreaths have been presented, they resume their places and take up their candles. The First Officiant continues.

First Officiant: Having received your laurels, each of you is known from this day forth as an honored Laureate. As such, you may now put on your Laureate pin.

When the candidates have completed the pinning of their pins, the Officiants 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.