

YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE SILVER RAG

Instructions:

This is not a part of the ceremony and is not to be read aloud, but it should be studied carefully by all Ragers who have parts in conducting the ceremony.

In the presentation of the Rag, there is a very close, inter-personal relationship with a strong emotional impact. Your sincerity in what you are doing and saying as you take part in the ceremony and as you welcome the Rager into this step is an element which makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts should speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. As you prepare, if there are words which are unfamiliar to you, ask about them. Remember to speak in a warm, personal tone. Be sure to read your part over in advance several times so that you know what you are saying.

HOW WE LEARN

We learn best by the "feeling" that moves between us, rather than by just what we say. Show a deep feeling of affection for those who are accepting the Silver Rag.

Explanations during the ceremony appear in parenthesis and are not to be read aloud.

This ceremony should be held in a secluded spot away from Camp, including in any one ceremony only the number of persons for which space is available at the Ragers' Emblem.

PERSONNEL NECESSARY FOR THE SILVER RAG CEREMONY:

Chief
Four Disciples
Guides for the candidates
Chaplain

NOTE: A possible addition to this ceremony would be to include Matthew 5:2-16 in the second disciple's reading.

"One day as the crowds were gathering, he went up the hillside with his disciples and sat down and taught them there."

"Humble men are very fortunate!" he told them, "For the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. Those who mourn are fortunate! For they shall be comforted. The meek and lowly are fortunate! For the whole wide world belongs to them."

"Happy are those who long to be just and good, for they shall be completely satisfied. Happy are the kind and merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Happy are those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God. Happy are those who strive for peace – they shall be called the sons of God. Happy are those who are persecuted because they are good, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

“When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers – wonderful! Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a tremendous reward awaits you up in heaven and remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted too.”

“You are the world’s seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world? And you yourselves will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the world’s light—a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light! Let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.”

Ideas For Making Your Rag Ceremonies Special

Use music.

PERSONALIZE:

i.e., Tom, whom do you bring?
I bring Kathy and Ben, who wish...

Use readings, scriptural and others, which are personalized to reflect the individual's counseling sessions. Use them at the end, or interspersed throughout the Ceremony.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use pauses.

Be purposeful and serious; no unnecessary talking.

Open and close with prayer.

Everyone should be standing or sitting behind or to the side of the candidates when they take off their blindfolds, so they have an unobstructed view of the point.

Whenever possible, have one person guide each candidate up the trail. This is more personal and intimate than the "chain gang" method and eliminates the need for spoken instructions on where to walk.

Be conscious of rustling papers, etc. Plan ahead when pages will be turned.

Go over the sequence of events at the point beforehand, to eliminate uncomfortable pauses while we figure out "What's next."

At night, candles provide a nice light at the point if it is fire safe and regulations permit.

Put a Rag on the cross that symbolizes the Ceremony in progress.

Keep the blindfold on the new Ragers until all wishing to speak privately with him/her have had the opportunity. Ask the newcomer(s) to sit and be comfortable during this time.

Allow time after for the new and old Ragers to share some personal thoughts before the Ceremony is closed.

Leave the newcomer(s) alone at the point after the ceremony. Be sure to tell them that you'll be waiting a few yards down the trail.

The Silver Rag – A challenge of acceptance of or re-dedication to the Christian way of life, or spiritual growth

CEREMONY

GUIDE: (New Silver Ragers are blindfolded and properly placed at the beginning of the Ragger's Trail.)

Fellow campers, may I have your attention for a moment so that I may give you a few instructions concerning the Silver Rag Ceremony? You have grown in Body, Mind, and Spirit during the past days and months. You have revealed here in camp that you seek further growth and added opportunity to be a leader among your fellow campers and staff members; you have expressed the desire to take this second important step in the order of the Rag. When you became a Blue Ragger you accepted the challenge to be loyal to God, your Country, One's Best Self, and the Ragers' Creed. This second step, the Silver Rag, requires a greater act of faith on your part. It challenges you to become a disciple of God – committing your life to Him and His cause. During the ceremony you will meet four disciples along the trail who will explain the ideals of the Silver Rag. Before we proceed on the Ragger's Trail, let me assure you that you need fear no physical harm. We begin instead, a spiritual experience that is beautiful and inspiring. The blindfold merely shut out the world around you and helps turn your thoughts inward to your own heart and upward to God. This is a sacred ceremony and all your thoughts should be in harmony with it. Let us now, each one silently pray to God that we shall enter this Silver Rag Ceremony with open hearts. (After a short pause and without further words, the guide and helpers start along the trail.)

FIRST DISCIPLE: Ragers of the Trail! I am the first disciple and I desire to challenge any who seek the Silver Rag. Whom do you bring?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who desire(s) to become a more worthy follower(s) of God and a leader of others.

FIRST DISCIPLE: One goal of the Silver Ragers is to honor and respect his/her own body. The importance of this is clearly stated in First Corinthians:

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and the God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are."

Since your mind is so important to God, you should keep your thoughts as well as your speech, clean and honest. If it is your desire to do this, please answer – "I do." (Wait for an answer.) You may proceed.

SECOND DISCIPLE: Ragers of the Trail! I am the second disciple and desire to give wisdom to any who seek the Silver Rag. Whom do you bring?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who desire(s) to become a more worthy follower(s) of God and a leader of others.

SECOND DISCIPLE: The second requirement of a Silver Ragger is to honor and respect one's own mind. God has granted people the ability to think, to imagine, to dream! To people He has granted the privilege of choice, of deciding for oneself what is right and what is wrong. People have the power to love and to hate, to believe or doubt, to laugh or to cry. Our minds are all-important. Each of us has the key to right or wrong, the beautiful or ugly, the true or the false. Remember what Proverbs says:

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Since your mind is so important to God, you should keep your thoughts as well as your speech clean and honest. If it is your desire to do this, please answer – "I do." (Wait for an answer.) You may proceed.

THIRD DISCIPLE: Ragers of the Trail! I am the Third Disciple and I desire to increase the love for others on the part of any who seek the Silver Rag. Whom do you bring?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who desire(s) to become a more worthy follower(s) of God and a leader of others.

THIRD DISCIPLE: The third requirement of a Silver Ragger is to honor and respect others. While we meet people who have many faults that are disturbing to us and which we may not like – still they are God’s children. He loves them in spite of their faults and so should we. You have familiarized yourself with the two greatest commandments proclaimed by Jesus. His commandments are:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these,”

Getting along with other people requires great skill and careful attention on your part. You will need God’s guidance to do it. You must learn to both “give and take” in the right spirit – you must trust others and keep faith in them – forgiving their mistakes. If you desire in your heart to seek this way of life for yourself, please answer – “I do.” (Wait for an answer.) You may proceed.

FOURTH DISCIPLE: Ragers of the Trail! I am the Fourth Disciple and I wish to tell any who seek the Silver Rag, the importance of God and the spiritual side of life. Whom do you bring?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who desire(s) to become a more worthy follower(s) of God and a leader of others.

FOURTH DISCIPLE: (Name(s), I will share with you the importance of facing your future with trust and confidence in God. Listen to these words.

“One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along a beach with God. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to him, and the other to God. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This really bothered him and he questioned God about it. ‘God, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you, you would leave me.’ God replied, ‘My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you see only one set of footprints; it was then that I carried you.’”

(Footprints, author unknown)

Seek to strengthen your relationship with God. We must all learn to face forward to our future, for this is where our life is to be lived. By doing this you will feel the spirit of the Christian way of life. You may proceed.

CHIEF: Guide, whom bring you here, to Ragers’ Point?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who has passed all the gates of our Ragers’ Trail and now seeks the next challenge as a Silver Ragger.

CHIEF: (Name(s)), as you came along the Trail, you learned four great truths about yourself in relation to your God and fellowman. Let me repeat them concisely for you:

The Spirit of God dwells within you. Your BODY is its temple.
Your MIND is the compass of your life, determining its direction. Keep it clean and use it well.
Love God with your whole heart and love others as yourself.
Through the SPIRIT with you, dedicate your life to God and serve Him.

Body, Mind, and Spirit – these three bound together by respect and love for all God’s children regardless of race, creed or color and demonstrated daily in your life here at camp and likewise at home. This is the challenge of the Silver Rag. If you are willing to accept this challenge, please answer, “I am.” (Wait for answer.) Since you have accepted this challenge, you are ready to receive your Silver Rag as an outward sign of an inward goal. Please kneel on your right knee. (Rags are tied. While tying the Rag, a few words of encouragement should be shared with the Ragger. As soon as the Rag is tied, have the person sit down, still blind folded, and be comfortable. Other Raggars may wish to speak personally with the new Ragger. When all Rags are tied and everyone is finished with their personal talks with the new Ragger(s), the Chief asks for the blind folds to be removed. Raggars may take their appropriate positions around the emblem or everyone may sit outside the circle.)

It takes time to accomplish your challenges. Listen to these words. (For some faiths you may substitute “God” for “Jesus.”)

“Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord,
Abide in Him always and lean on His word.
Make friends of God’s children; help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy: The world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone;
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shall be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness will see.”

CHIEF: You see before you the Emblem of the Raggars. May we remind you again that it is traditional that no Ragger enters that portion of the Emblem reserved for other Rags. The circle stands for the circle of friendship of all YMCAs and people around the world – wherever they may be. The square represents the four-square life of a true Ragger: physical, social, spiritual, and mental. The triangle stands for strength because of this strength – we have named the three points: Body, Mind, and Spirit – to remind you to keep the challenge that you have accepted for yourself. And at the center of our emblem and at the center of our hearts – lies the cross. It appears so that we won’t forget the wonderful lesson that Jesus taught to us through His life – His example and His words. Shall we repeat, or sing, the Raggars’ Creed:

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

CHIEF: Would our Chaplain lead us in short prayer, followed by all of us joining in the Lord's Prayer.

As you now leave this place as a Silver Ragger, remember that you should no longer be the same person that you were just a short time ago. You have now taken upon yourself a new stature as a co-worker with God – committing yourself to Him stronger than ever before. May God bless you richly in this new step that you have taken.

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