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**YMCA
RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM
STUDY GUIDE FOR
THE RED RAG**

For campers 16 years of age and over who are accepting the challenge toward sacrifice of time, talent, and personal will.

A. Red Ragers' Creed (to be memorized)

We believe the best and happiest life is the one spent not for self, but for others.

With this for our ideal, we pledge our hearty loyalty to our society and to its principles.

We will be earnest seekers after truth, we will be friends not only to each other, but to all, and we will do our utmost to advance in true Christian manhood (womanhood).

We will stand everywhere and always for purity and righteousness.

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B. Isaiah 6:6-8

Then flew one of the seraphim to me having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the alter. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me!" And He said, "Go!"

C. St. Matthew 26:39

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

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D. Psalms 40:6-8

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears has thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering has thou not required.

I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.

E. Ceremony Preparation

You will be asked to name your Ideal whose spirit and attitude toward God and life you wish to follow, i.e. Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc.

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YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE RED 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 Ragger into this step is an element which makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts 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 whom you are welcoming into the Rag Society.

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 RED RAG Ceremony:

Chief of Red Ragers
Four Ragers
Conductor
Chaplain

Note: Bring a blanket

The Red Rag cont.

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 Red Rag cont.

The Red Rag – A challenge toward sacrifice of time, talent and personal will.

CEREMONY

CONDUCTOR: (Out of sight and hearing of the others, blindfold the Guest(s) and instructs him/her as follows.)

You are now leaving behind all frivolity. You have nothing to fear. The blindfold is only to keep out all distracting sights and allow you to concentrate on the Ceremony. Pay close attention to all that is said to you, but speak only when you are spoken to.

FIRST RAGGER: (When within four feet) Guide, whom do you bring into our Realm of Ideals and Sacrifice?

CONDUCTOR: Ragger who represents Ideals, I am bringing to our Realm one who desires to share in our ideals, purposes and fellowship.

FIRST RAGGER: In our Realm of Ideals, our trust is placed in that which is greater than we. Candidate, whom have you chosen as your ideal, whose spirit and attitude toward God and life you wish to emulate?

CANDIDATE: (Answers choosing from Jesus, Moses, etc.)

FIRST RAGGER: It is well, you may proceed.

SECOND RAGGER: (When within four feet) Guide, whom do you bring into our Realm?

CONDUCTOR: Ragger who represents Sacrifice of Time, I am bringing _____, who has chosen an ideal and wishes to dwell in our Realm.

SECOND RAGGER: The need for leaders who are followers of the highest ideals is a great one. Wherever and whenever in the history of mankind there have been needs, God has raised up noble men and women to fill the need. As you become a wearer of the Red Rage, the call comes to you to so prepare yourself that whatever need for leadership may present itself to you throughout your life, you will find yourself ready to devote time and talent to the service of others. Isaiah tells us:

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’
Then I said, ‘Here am I, Lord. Send me.’”

As a representative of the Sacrifice of Time, I must ask you this question. Are you willing to answer the call with the words, “Here am I, Lord. Send me?” If so, please repeat them as a personal commitment.

CANDIDATE: (Answers) “Here am I, Lord. Send me.”

SECOND RAGGER: You may proceed.

The Red Rag cont.

CONDUCTOR: Ragger who represents Sacrifice of Talents, I am bringing _____, who desires to accept the challenge of the Sacrifice of the Red Rag.

THIRD RAGGER: If you would become a wearer of the Red Rag, you must be willing to make great sacrifices; even of talents you consider your own.

Let me remind you of the life of Albert Schweitzer. His talent for music could have given him fame as the greatest authority on the music of Bach, and as a great organist. But he sacrificed this talent to use another more needed to God, and prepared himself to become a doctor, founding a hospital in the heart of Africa, and serving the sick of the land.

Think well before you answer this challenge. If you would become a wearer of the Red Rag, you must be willing to use your talents to the Glory of God, and not for yourself. (Pause) As a representative of the Sacrifice of Talents, do you still desire to enter our Realm? If so, please answer "yes."

CANDIDATE: (Answers) "Yes."

THIRD RAGGER: You may proceed.

FOURTH RAGGER: Guide, whom are you conducting into our Realm?

CONDUCTOR: Ragger who represents Sacrifice of Will, I am bringing _____, who has now been thrice challenged and given words of wisdom. I believe him/her to be ready for this experience.

FOURTH RAGGER: Sacrifice is never easy. It demands the very highest in courage. Scripture tells us that as Jesus faced his hour of trouble, he went apart and fell on his face and prayed, saying:

‘O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’

A modern poet voices his cry for courage at the call for sacrifice in these words:

“Let me not pray to be sheltered from danger, but to be fearless in facing them.
Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it.
Let me not look for allies in life’s battle fields, but to inner strength.
Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved, but hope for the patience to win my freedom.
Grant to me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone, but let me
Find the grasp of your hand in my failure.”

Realizing that as a wearer of the Red Rag you must be willing to discipline your will to the point of true sacrifice, do you still desire to accept this challenge? If so, please answer "I do."

CANDIDATE: (Answers) "I do."

FOURTH RAGGER: Listen carefully, then, while I repeat to you the Creed of the Red Ragers.

“We believe the best and happiest life is the one spent not for self, but for others.
With this for our ideal, we pledge our hearty loyalty to the principles of the Red Rag.
We will be earnest seekers after the truth. We will be friends not only to each other but to all, and we will do our utmost to advance in true humanity.
We will stand everywhere and always for purity and righteousness.”

Enter now into the Court of the Red Rag.

The Red Rag cont.

CHIEF OF THE RAGGERS: Whom do you bring into the Court of the Red Rag?

CONDUCTOR: I am bringing _____, who has passed all gates, and waits his/her final instruction.

CHIEF OF THE RED RAGGERS: _____, by the spirit you have shown, we believe that you are ready for the experience of the Red Rag. We also believe that you will uphold the tenets of the Red Rag – a willingness to sacrifice Time, Talents, and Will for the benefit of those about you. I would urge you at this moment to completely clear your mind of everything except thoughts of vows you are about to take. Kneel on your right knee. (Pause) You are now in the position of resolution. By kneeling thus, do you firmly resolve here before God and in the presence of your friends to keep the creed of the Red Rag uppermost in your mind, and to live an upright life after the pattern of your ideal? If so, please answer “I do.”

CANDIDATE: (Answers) “I do.”

CHIEF OF RED RAGGERS: Kneel now upon both knees. (Pause) You are now in the attitude of prayer. Remember that prayer is communion with God. Your ideal had regular times for prayer, at which times he sought quiet and solitude. He thanked God for blessings received, and asked help for others and strength for himself.

(NOTE: CAREFULLY CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE ONE OF THE NEXT TWO PARAGRAPHS)

(FOR CHRISTIANS) You will now lean forward stretching your arms outward, with your head and body resting upon the ground so that your body forms a cross.

You are lying prone, in the attitude of humility. (Pause to allow time for thought)

Think of the sacrifices of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (Pause)

Think of His sufferings as He made the supreme sacrifice upon the cross. (Pause)

Think of your personal responsibilities, and the challenge of your Red Rag. (Pause)

Remember always that you are expected to live Christ’s teachings in your life.

(FOR OTHER FAITHS) Raise your head toward heaven as a symbol of pride for your religion and as a sign of acceptance of ideals and challenges of the Red Rag. (Pause)

Think of your personal challenge. (Pause) Remember that you are expected to live up to the highest teachings of your ideal.

CHIEF OF THE RED RAGGERS: (At this point, while the candidate is still lying prone (or head raised toward heaven,) the chief will pray softly, close to the ear of the candidate, and meant for him alone, the following prayer. This may also be done by numerous people simultaneously for greater effect):

God be in your head and in your understanding.

God be in your eyes and in your looking.

God be in your mouth and in your speaking.

God be in your heart and in your thinking.

God be in your end and at your departing.

You will now assume the position of the Red Ragger, kneeling on both knees, and receive your Red Rag.

(While tying the Rag, a few words of encouragement should be shared with the new Ragger(s). As soon as the Rag is tied, have the person sit down, still blindfolded, and be comfortable. Other Raggars may wish to speak personally with the new Ragger(s). When all the Rags are tied and everyone is finished with their personal talks with the new Ragger(s), the Chief of the Red Raggars asks for the blindfolds to be removed.)

The Red Rag cont.

You see before you the Emblem of the Ragger. The circle stands for the circle of friendship of all YMCA's and people around the world – wherever they may be. The square represents the foursquare life of a true Ragger: physical, social, spiritual, and mental. The triangle stands for strength because it is the strongest geometric figure known to man. 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 never forget the wonderful lesson that Jesus taught to us through His life – His example and His words.

(Each Ragger may now take the position appropriate to his or her Rag if they choose.)

It is traditional that no Ragger enters that portion of the Rag Emblem reserved for other Rags. This tradition dictates that Blue and Silver Raggings remain outside the Circle. As you grow in body, mind and spirit, and take on new challenges so too will you become closer to God. Brown and Gold Raggings may enter the Circle but shall remain outside the Square. After accepting more difficult challenges and dedicating yourself to helping others through personal sacrifice, your relationship with God will strengthen. Red and Purple Raggings are invited to enter the Square, but shall remain outside the Triangle. Those that choose a lifetime commitment to God and service to the YMCA, and except the challenge of the White Rag may enter the Triangle and stand beside the Cross as a sign of their unwavering commitment to God and the Raggings Creed.

(An appropriate story may be told.)

Shall we repeat, or sing, the Raggings' 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.”

As you become a Red Ragger, you pass from a simple life of service to a life of dedication to leadership and sacrifice. With your acceptance of this new challenge, you place your life on the alter of dedication to those principals which have been made clear to you in the Ceremony in which you have just participated.

Remember that your Rage is not an honor, but an indication to those about you that you have passed into the Realm of High Ideals and offer as your sacrifice your Time, Talents, and Will.

(Chief may now include words directed specifically toward the life and personality of each new Red Ragger.)

(Ceremony may be closed by the Chaplain leading in prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer.)

(The new Ragger(s) may remain at the point to meditate after the others leave.)

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