

Make A Promise to Live Your Rituals Everyday

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The current world of fraternity and sorority life is seeking many of the same answers those of us were seeking twenty plus years ago. We continue to search for “the answers” when it comes to our members really “getting it”. As I have traveled the country speaking on college campuses, I have given away stickers to help participants remember my message or possibly contact me at a later date. The stickers have said “Ritual... Just Live It”, “What Would Our Founders Think of Us Today?”, and most recently “Ritual=Values=You”. Each one of these messages are intended to challenge all of us to remember why we are members of fraternities and sororities to begin with—to become the best people we can with the support of people we call our brothers and sisters.

Ritual As advisors, leaders, and friends, it is our responsibility to get our members past the performance of the ritual ceremony, although that is important, to the action part of our rituals. What do I mean? Our ceremonies are just that unless we move those words and symbols and have them become action-oriented aspects of our members’ lives. Our members are NOT getting it for the most part. They do not make a connection between the values and promises in those ceremonies to their everyday behavior. For example: “Today, I think I will just put whatever comes to mind on my Facebook, Twitter,

etc. and I don't really care what anyone thinks about it. I am going to use inappropriate language, I am going to attach a picture of myself or others" doing something offensive just because it is funny, and I am going to 'Tweet' about it too." Instead of saying to oneself, how will this represent me, my organization, my family, this person strictly ignores any consequences because they feel it is okay. Another example is that I am going to ignore hazing is happening in my chapter and as long I am not present when it happens, I am not responsible. Our rituals give us a road map as to how to be the best people we can be. They say in words how we should respect others and ourselves, they say how we should hold one another accountable, and how we should stand up for what is right.

Values When discussing values, I am intrigued by the various definitions and explanations that emerge. In my opinion, values are a comprehensive set of behaviors that guide how we live our lives. In fraternity and sorority life, values are what we describe as brotherhood and sisterhood—they are the way we love one another, hold one another accountable, and support one another to be the best people we can be. Our values as organizations lived out by our members really do matter. Today we are being judged by how we walk the talk of what we say we are about. People join fraternities and sororities for so many reasons.

What it comes down to is that we join hopefully, to share our college and beyond experiences with people who share common values. We search for people who have similar beliefs as we do and live those beliefs through our actions whether it be working on community service projects, striving to do well academically, working for a common good, taking care of one another, making a difference, standing up for what you believe in, whatever the case may be.

You! Each one of us makes a promise to live the best life we can and to be the best members of our organization that we can be. Our fraternity and sorority experience has the ability to change our lives. As someone who has been initiated for almost 25 years, I know that joining a sorority was one of the best decisions I have ever made. My professional and personal journey has been enhanced because of all of the amazing experiences and people I have encounter along the way. It is each one of our responsibilities to step up and say, *am I doing what I said I would do? Am I challenging myself and those around me to be the best people we can be? Am I passionate about the experiences and opportunities I have through my fraternity and sorority experiences? Do I try my best to live the values expressed through my ritual, creeds, mottos, and symbols to the best of my ability?* These are questions I am faced with on a daily basis and I challenge each one of us to examine our fraternal experiences and to be our best!

As a professional speaker with CAMPUSPEAK, Mari Ann has several outstanding keynotes for fraternity and sorority life, and the college experience. To find about more about Mari Ann and her keynotes for college students, visit campuspeak.com/callais.