

# The Virtual Order Of St. Isidore Of Seville



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Bono V ince Malum ~ Over Come Evil With Good  
[www.st-isidore.org](http://www.st-isidore.org)

## KNIGHTHOOD & CHIVALRY BACK IN STYLE AGAIN



As we look around us and surf the net, we can see the age old honor of Knighthood and Chivalry are on the rise. Many new Orders of Chivalry are springing up everywhere you look. In the physical world as well as the virtual one. Most of the new Orders that are springing up are Christian in nature.

It seems most are coming about do to Christians wanting something good and clean to belong to outside the church walls. And some are looking for more then just their own church folk to fellowship with and other types of mission work to be a part of. But whatever the case may be, the Christian Order of Knighthood seems to be the way to go.

Everyday a new web site can be found that pertains to Christian Knighthood and Chivalry. Some for giving to missions and real charities and teaching Chivalry and morals to our youth, while others for self promotion and gain.

Whereas most age old Knightly Orders of Chivalry were begun in Europe and were for the most part male dominated for hundreds of years. Today women are now becoming part of these Orders as well. Hundreds of years ago women didn't go off to war, but some did help protect the home front. But today in the western world and in some parts of the east, women serve in the Armed Forces in one fashion or another. There are those women who have never been in the military, but serve in other aspects of security like, police officers, firefighters or other Agencies for their countries.

In the earliest traditions of Knighthood, Knights knighted Knights, and then heads of the church such as the Pope, and then kings and queens.

The question is, what is the function of Knights today? The Knights of old were warriors and lived by a code of Chivalry in which they swore to serve and protect and to live a life that was becoming of a Knight.

So what is it that is bringing back the old ways of Chivalry and Honor in our time and what is it about these Orders that make people want to belong? Some say it's the good ole moral standards, while others say it's belonging to something that shares their views and values about things. But whatever the reason is, chivalry is back in fashion.

There are not many groups in the world that Christians can belong to and be comfortable without compromising their faith, but it is good to know there are now a few good international Orders Knighthood and Chivalry we as Christians can be a part of.

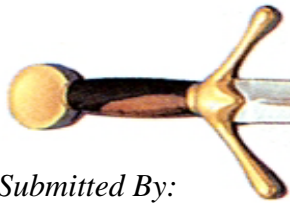


## What Knightly Order of Chivalry Is Right for You?

Listed are just a few of the Orders of Knighthood and Chivalry:

1. The Virtual Order of St. Isidore of Seville
2. The Most Honorable Christian Knights of the Rose
3. l'Ordre Equestre de la Blanche Hermine de Bretagne.

There are many others out, there to check out and investigate. Certain ones might not suite everybody, but there is always one that will fit ones own personal-ity.



# Determining Sword Quality

## A Beginner's Guide

*Submitted By:*

***Dr. Richard McKenzie, Vice-Chancellor***

While shopping around for swords, you might have come across some smiths that claim their swords as "the best made" or "highest quality". These claims might have some basis, but it doesn't hurt to define a set of criteria by which you determine quality. Part of this Sword Shopper's Guide's goal is to help people to not get cheated into purchasing what's actually not a sword but an over-ambitious kitchen knife! Swords and knives differ in what's expected out of them. A sword is most definitely not a longer knife, and people who merely approach it that way may be selling you something no better than a Taiwanese replica piece of junk!

There are so many factors that determine quality. Here's a very cursory breakdown to get you started. Metallurgy of Metal Used First off, anything made of stainless steel is not a real sword but a decorative sword. Anyone selling you stainless steel as a real sword needs to understand that stainless blades are molecularly brittle and cannot take nearly the same punishment as the swords of old, regardless of the steel coming from Toledo of Spain or any other historical landmark. Including 440(j2) stainless steel. Modern metallurgy has had incredible advances. Steels of different metallurgies have different designations, but they are all generally simple alloys or "low alloy" high carbon steel. Let's take stainless steel for example. It's generally very high in chromium which acts as a grain enhancer but weakens the molecular bonds - definitely not a weakness you want in a sword!

On the other hand, 5160 steel is used much in truck springs and has proven itself as a sword that can give as much as it can get. Other steels that are used for, say, higher end Japanese katanas might be made from forge welded cable steel, or from the AISI 10xx series such as 1050, 1084, 1095, etc. which are metallurgically similar (though with differences) with traditional Japanese steel sources. L6 is a steel that is currently the talk of the town, with incredible performance being reported.

In the case of Japanese swords, the steel must be able to be clay tempered to create a real temper line (or "hamon") which is something high alloy steels cannot do. Some smiths have used O1, D2, or A2 for swords. These are in the tool steel category, and can serve as functional swords. But if you want the same beautiful aesthetics as a real Japanese sword temper line, you're out of luck unless the smith knows a special technique to achieve this. Quality of Steel Used Another thing of importance is the quality of the source of steel itself. How so? Many swords manufactured in the Philippines and other third world countries such as India and Pakistan may use "spring steel".

These are in fact recycled springs from tanks or trucks. While in America the cost of new 5160 steel is quite low, the recycling of truck springs could present a problem. Often times, recycled spring steel is not processed properly; the process of treating the steel takes some skill, but third world countries have been known to cut corners. This results in "memory" in the steel which may cause the steel to stress and want to revert to its original grain direction. Also, without proper annealing and normalization, the steel can suffer microcrystalline cracks.

Thus, over a period of time, this can cause "cracking" along the grain boundaries as the sword is subjected to stress and shock. The result is that swords can eventually break if they are not made correctly. Thus, be very careful when purchasing swords. Find out what country they are made with. Observe the sales pitch. "Live steel" or "Spring Steel" or just "High Carbon Steel" can be either incomplete or misleading information depending on how its presented. This is not to say that steel from recycled sources are bad. Some of the best Japanese style swords have been made from anything from forge welded cables to Russian anchor iron. It's how the steel is recycled and retreated for the sword.

## **Heat Treating**

The goal of heat treating is to achieve an ideal balance between toughness and hardness - qualities which are inversely proportional to one another! Toughness has to do with impact absorption and shock tolerance, while hardness has to do with cutting and edge-holding capability. Too soft, and your sword gets cut into. Too hard and the sword is too brittle. Poor heat treating can totally ruin a sword. It's amazing how some businesses or websites boast about the quality of the steel but speak very little about how a sword was heat treated. If there is no mention, and the sword retailer or reseller cannot comment on the heat treat, and if the sword is US\$300 or under, then chances are your sword may not perform as well as a sword made by a smith who paid particular attention to maximizing the performance of the blade.

In the case of Japanese swords, the edge is harder for cutting durability, while the back of the blade is softer to withstand the

stresses of combat (though the Samurai tried to kill with single blows and avoid blade-to-blade contact altogether!) If you don't heat treat it right, initially, it might not survive the final water quench and end up crack. Some cracks are very obvious, and some are very fine. The fine ones can grow larger over time in some cases.

Some Renaissance Faire interpretations of, say, the Japanese sword, are - to say the least - pitiful. They do not have a hardened edge and softer spine like traditional Japanese swords do which is a magnificent marriage between toughness and hardness - a result of extra careful heat treating. They are merely selling a curved bar of steel with a sharp point and a sharp edge which do not require as much work!

## **Weight and Balance**

Even if some have a good concept of the first two points, some sword makers don't have any concept with how a sword should feel. The best thing to do is to discretely ask the sword maker his philosophy on approaching a blade design. Dean Piesner, a sword maker in St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada, relates that he first determines with the customer what the intended use of the blade - and its intended target is. These factors - including the person's physical measurements - come into play in the resulting sword design. A sword made to cut armor will differ in design than a sword designed to just cut through

flesh. Historically, the Japanese sword had differences in balancing thickness and blade width, and adding fullers (or grooves - not "blood grooves") to lighten the blades in some cases. A large blade needn't be all that heavy, as a result of balancing all these factors. Thus the ability to craft a weapon that satisfies (and exceeds) the parameters of its intended use is a tremendous blessing. In short, a sword does not have to be heavy, contrary to some people's belief. In fact, a heavy sword can undermine maneuverability, and in a life or death situation I would bet my life on a well balanced and lighter sword that was made with the aforementioned qualities (Points 1, 2, and 3).

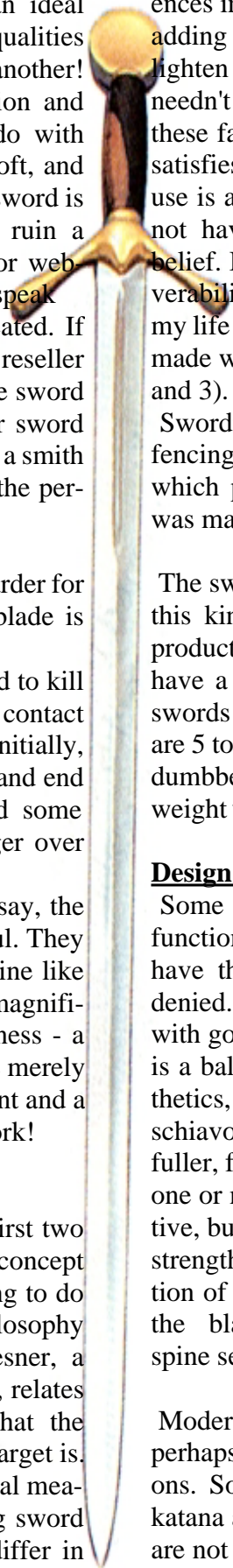
Swordmakers of yesteryear constantly worked with fencing masters, etc. in a synergistic relationship which provided constant feedback of how a sword was made.

The sword was made for man. Thus a smith without this kind of support is hindered from providing a product that can serve as a weapon. Otherwise you have a wall-hanger or decorative piece. Beware of swords that are over 3 lbs. Some decorative swords are 5 to 10 lbs. which is as heavy as a weight-training dumbbell. In olden times, a sword of that incredible weight would get you killed by someone else's sword!

## **Design and Aesthetics**

Some say, "Who cares how it looks, so long as it's functional?" However, the sword of ancient times have their own artistic elegance which cannot be denied. While not all swords are ornate or detailed with gold, silver, or gems, the fact remains that there is a balance, again, between sword design and aesthetics, ranging from swept hilt rapiers to Italian schiavonas to Scottish basket hilt broadswords. A fuller, for example, may in some swords be joined by one or more smaller fullers. The effect looks decorative, but the lighter sword suffers no compromises in strength. If you imagine the diamond-like cross section of a sword and picture a fuller on either side of the blade, a fuller basically creates two spines. The spine serves as a backbone of support for a blade.

Modern day sword makers who make ugly weapons perhaps can benefit from a study of historical weapons. Some Western-interpretations of the Japanese katana are indeed pitiful in appearance. The handles are not of wood, as was the tradition, but is basically the tang made thicker, and then wrapped around with an approximation (or an attempt)



of a traditional wrap, and then "frozen" with epoxy. One person related to me, "They do that because they just don't know how to make a proper handle and wrap the thing properly!" Interestingly, they boast about the functional aspects of the sword to detract you from looking at the poor aesthetics.

At one knife show, someone showed me his "katana" and boasted about it, indicating four different Rockwell hardness readings, from edge to two mid-points and finally the spine. He was very pleased with himself at the differential heat treat he achieved. But what is it made of? "Stainless steel." Ah. Bu-bye. And if you're approaching someone to make a Japanese style katana, it's worth studying the actual geometry of a Japanese blade. A katana blade, if you study it carefully, is beautiful because of its wonderful temper line, its grain (which comes from forging and not stock removal or grinding) and the geometry of the blade. People who make curved bars of steel with sharp edges and sharp points have entirely missed the point of the katana and have inadvertently made the sword heavier (this is one serious problem I have with many Renaissance Faire interpretations of katanas.) The attention to detail of the facets of a traditional Japanese blade given by traditional sword polishers is an immense discipline of many years of study and should not be flippantly overlooked!

Another thing to take into account is the hilt. The hilt comprises the guard, the handle, and the pommel. While the pommel is mostly seen as the counterweight to the blade, the hilt has to be seen as a whole. This, in turn, has to be factored in with the previous Point regarding weight and balance. Many fantasy swords have the wildest hilts in the world, and yet the hilts are so heavy that the sword makes no sense as a weapon.

For the handle, I find that certain wire wraps are very comfortable, while certain others will absolutely tear your skin off or give you blisters. Certain leather grips are good, but some others may give your hand a hard time. Those "katanas" which are, say, parachute chord over the handle/tang can be uncomfortable to the hand by virtue that you're trying to grip a flat rectangular bar of steel and not a more ergonomic rounder handle that a wood-carved handle can give you. Adherence to Tradition There is a reason why swords were made the way they were. They've come from many years and generations of painstaking research, trial and effort. Certain designs worked and certain ones didn't. Consider the Japanese katana and

how it maintained its general shape throughout the centuries! There is a saying that if we don't study from history we are bound to repeat its mistakes. I personally admire the swordmakers who approach museums and private collections of historical antique swords and research how they were made, their construction and their balance.

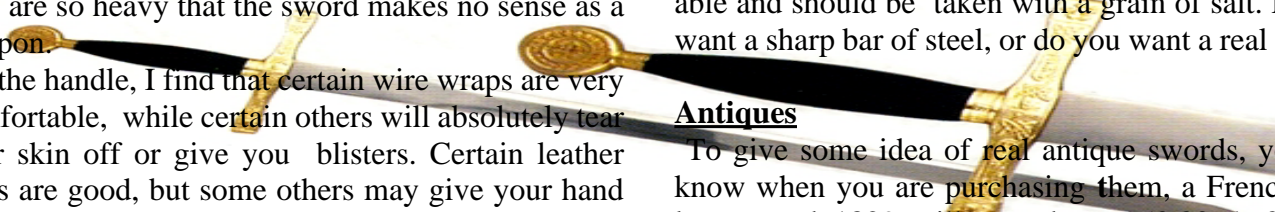
My personal feeling is that modern technology should generally only enhance and not replace the overall creation of the sword. For example, certain metals or techniques or tools can aid and help deliver a better performing product and improve consistency of quality. Swordmaking is as much an art as it is a science, and perhaps a way of life. Recreations of historical swords should, at the very least, match the functionality of the original. Some modern pieces may not duplicate the ornate decorative features of the original sword as closely as the originals were, so as to maintain affordability and lower cost. The degree of decoration does not necessarily guarantee a more battleworthy sword.

In the case of Japanese swords, creating a Western implementation where it's a contiguous bar of steel and wrapped either with an approximation of a handle wrap, or just strung with parachute chord, etc. are strictly Western interpretations and don't truly qualify as "katanas". Devoted schools of tradition feel these sword should not even be marketed as katanas but as "katanas" because so much work has been bypassed in making such a sword. Smiths of ancient Japan have been known to sit at the feet of their masters for at least a decade learning the craft of sword making. Claims by smiths today - who have bypassed the painstaking processes - and claim superior performance are debatable and should be taken with a grain of salt. Do you want a sharp bar of steel, or do you want a real sword?

### Antiques

To give some idea of real antique swords, you will know when you are purchasing them, a French artillery sword 1829 will run about 950.00 A Scottish Basket hilt Broadsword 1769 will run about 1,450.00. A good copy of a medieval sword around 145.00, and a Napoleonic sabre 385.00 now for the scary part, those prices are in British pounds, double it for US currency.

Conclusion Finally, does the sword feel like it is a part of you - an extension of yourself? Is its use awkward to your own natural body movements or does its use appear intuitive? While these are debatable and subjective qualities, I feel these are a good start for a



a beginner. If a sword maker has satisfied the aforementioned points, the quality of their work compared with that of others following the same criteria will be - not identical - but within the same ballpark. There will always be room for new discoveries and new methods and approaches to forging and design. A smith that achieves the aforementioned points and yet is actively researching ways to improve quality is probably worth your attention. Dean Piesner says, "It's not the final product that is the art but rather the process itself."



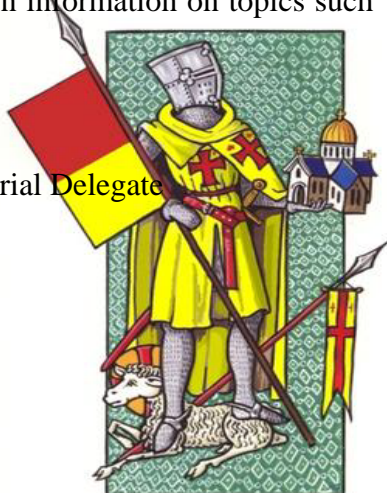
## Greetings From US Province 3 Magisterial Delegate

Hello to my fellow Brothers and Sisters! At the time of this writing, we are in the season of Lent. By definition, Lent is the time of preparation for Holy Week, leading up to Easter. For many, it is a time to give up something like candy or smoking. This is a holy time, a precious time, a time for learning and growth, for renewal and reconciliation. During the season of Lent, we have the chance to re-center our lives, to check and see if we are living according to God's will or simply following our own wants and desires. I hope this is a time of great peace and spiritual growth for everyone.

Again, I welcome any contact from members, especially those in Province 3. I encourage all members to join the Order's board (<http://stisidore.proboards1.com>).

It is a great way to communicate with your fellow members and, also, gain information on topics such as heraldry.

Blessings!  
Rev. Susan Phillips  
US Province 3 Magisterial Delegate



## Promotions Within the Order

The Order is proud to announce the first two promotions of the year of two of its members, to the rank of Knight Commander.

**Richard Talbot-Jones, Seville Pursuivant**  
**Bobby Pipin, Herald Extraordinary**



*Congratulations!*



*Welcome To Our  
Newest Members*

## Our Newest Members as of Dec 2003

1. Mr Peter von Groote Oklahoma, US
2. Dr Wayne MacDonald Georgia, US
3. Rt. Rev., Chev. William Crowson Mississippi, US
4. Mr Scott Jenkins Virginia US
5. Rev Wilhelm Dorenbos Netherlands, Netherlands
6. Count MLADEN KRUPA Croatia, KA
7. Rev Jeffrey Hall West Midlands, UK
8. Mr. Francisco de Almozara y Valenzuela, Chile
9. Rev Joseph Goodwin Ohio, US
10. Br Orly Benedict Michigan US
11. Rev Jake Harmon North Carolina, US
12. Mr Lee Daniels Kent, UK
13. Rev. Fr. Patrick Rodriguez Texas, US
14. Mr Chris Mountain Berkshire, UK

**All have been invested as Knights of the Order.**

# Local Defense Guilds of Holland



*Submitted by:*

*Rev. Wil Dorenbos, KStI*

I'm a member of the order of St. Catherine and St George of Rosmalen. This order is preparing a feast to celebrate it's (at least) 450 years old coming June. When going through old documents for a story on its history, a charter was found of yet another order of Rosmalen, stating that this order was reinstated in the year 1600. This order had apparently been dormant for quite some time.

## What Are These Orders And Where Did They Come From?

The German tribes that once lived in this part of Europe organized themselves in groups of one hundred, so there would be enough men to defend the settlement. Roughly there would be between 30 and 50 men to do so. This habit of creating "defense" groups of this size remained until the 11th and 12th century. Younger sons of landed knights joined these groups, as they couldn't inherit and had to find their own fortune. When the cities and villages came up in the 13 century, in this part of Europe there was no central authority, just local lords and their overlords. The cities and villages didn't want to be dependant of them and took care their own defense. They made defense groups consisting of a few knights/ officers and some 20 to 40 men. These men, as they were mostly freeman (yeomen) from the village, would usually be archers. As the guilds were coming to power, the defense groups were embedded in the guild system. From the 14 century the defense guilds were known by their main weapon, normally either bow, crossbow, or sword.

The bow and crossbow groups were called archer guilds and the others sword guilds. As now like other guilds they had to name themselves, they used the names of their Patron-Saints: St. Sebastian for the longbow, St. George for the crossbow and St. Andrew for the musket.

Each defense group had it's own Church / parish to defend. So normally there were a number of these groups present in a village. For instance in Rosmalen there were three of them.

During peace time these groups challenged each other and organized matches to keep in shape.

But their job consisted of much more than just fighting. They were also police, fireguard, assisted with all sort of disasters, diseases, and took care of the poor and the homeless. They assisted with the repairs on the city walls as well as on the Church. The members had to take an oath of brotherhood and loyalty and had to live according to the rules of a knightly order.

The archer and sword guilds existed till the end of the 18th century, then with the French occupation, and after that the Monarchy most of them vanished. However in the South a lot of them were made dormant as the Catholic Church (to which they were closely connected) was abolished. With the return of the Bishops, about the same time we became a Monarchy, a number of them was reinstated. And from time to time this process was repeated, when dormant orders were found, and the local community wanted to have them back. Nice detail is that if such a reinstallation is done the right way by the right persons, according to the law the order never ceased to exist. The oldest date that can be legally proven is taken into account as the founding date. As the the order of St. Catherine and St. George could prove that they existed in 1554, at the reinstallation, this year was registered as their official founding date. Hence now the feast.