

“WAIT, SO THE RITUAL IS SPIRITUAL? HUH.”

Jason Scott Embry (Western Kentucky '94), a member of the Ritual committee, shares his thoughts on spirituality and the Ritual.

Mythology has always been insufferably cool. Whether you know the way that Odysseus and his men escaped the Cyclops* or you just think having a Minotaur would be a great way to keep trespassers off your lawn, at some point in your Western upbringing you were exposed to the ideas of Greek and Roman mythology.

Within that framework, then, it's understandable that much of Sigma Alpha Epsilon's Ritual draws from Greek and Roman mythology, as well as Christianity, as reference.

Noble Leslie DeVotie, the Founder of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and the father of the Ritual, was a strong Christian. After his graduation from the University of Alabama, he served as pastor of the First Baptist Church in Selma, Alabama.

DeVotie used different allusions – he was a brilliant man, remember, graduating as valedictorian with a 96.75 GPA – from Greek to Roman to Catholic to Latin and even Hebrew to allude to what he felt we all needed to be: challenged to be the best contributors to life we could all be.

And this is where the Greek and Roman mythologies fit into the Ritual. By weaving those themes throughout the central text of the Fraternity experience, he was calling us to be the best we can be through the use of metaphor. And the best part? Even though the Jewish and Islam traditions, as well as other faiths, were not part of the Southern tradition 150 years ago, the fact that we were not created as a Christian-specific organization can be extrapolated to include all faiths.

Thus because it was not created as a fraternity of a specific faith, Sigma Alpha Epsilon could be understood to be a Fraternity of values. And those values are used to challenge us to be the best we can possibly be.

One of the great unanswerable questions still remains, however. Why do we pledge allegiance to Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, rather than to Athena, the Greek version? We are a Greek organization, after all. It's one of the mysteries of the man DeVotie.

**They drove a stake made from a sharpened tree trunk into his only eye while he was passed out drunk, then escaped by grabbing the undersides of the rams that were running out of his cave.*