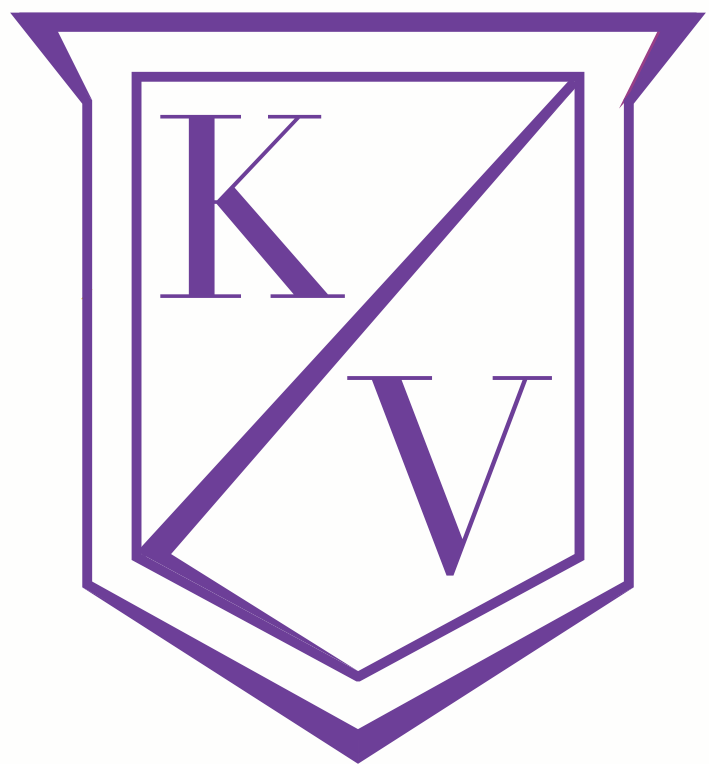


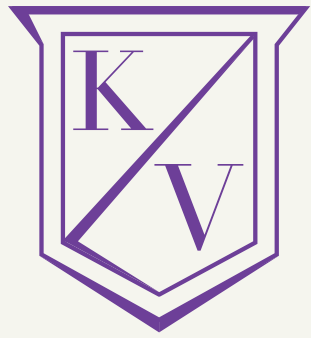
# Knightly Virtues



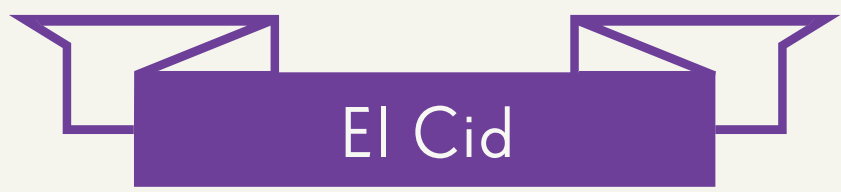
El Cid

Learning About the  
Virtues of Honesty and Humility

Heroes Who Inspire



# THE STORY



El Cid

Story retold by the Jubilee Centre for  
Character and Virtues

# El Cid — The Story



EL CID (Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar 1043-1099)

Imagine the scene. The newly crowned king of northern Spain is sitting in splendour receiving promises of loyalty from his subjects. This is King Alfonso, brother of Sancho and 4 other brothers and sisters.

This is a great moment for Alfonso. He had previously been robbed of his lands by his brother Sancho. Well now Sancho was dead and not only had Alfonso got his lands back, but he had also inherited Sancho's lands as well.

Suddenly the atmosphere changes. The next knight to come forward is El Cid, the friend and champion of his brother Sancho. El Cid was a great knight with an awesome reputation for his success and bravery in battle. El Cid's many acts of tolerance and forgiveness towards his enemies had already endeared him to the Spanish people.

El Cid kneels in front of Alfonso but instead of a vow of allegiance he asks a question.

"Did you kill your brother? Did you murder Sancho?"

When Alfonso and Sancho's father Ferdinand was alive, he was king of a large area of northern Spain. Ferdinand wanted his 6 children to live peaceably after his death, so he divided his kingdom between them. Sancho, Alfonso and their 2 brothers were each left large areas of land. Their 2 sisters were each left a city.

Ferdinand's hopes for peace and friendship amongst his children were short lived. Sancho was furious that he, the eldest son had not been left all of his father's kingdom and he decided to take it back, by force if necessary.

"I am my father's eldest son" boomed Sancho. "He should have left ALL of his kingdom to me. Why has he given lands to my brothers? I will have all of the kingdom. You must help me El Cid. My brothers and sisters must hand their lands to me or I will take them by force"

El Cid had grown up with Sancho. He had learnt his fighting skills on horseback and with the sword and lance alongside Sancho. El Cid had led many successful armies for Sancho and had achieved fame for his success in one to one combat as Sancho's champion. For all his love and respect for Sancho, El Cid was appalled at his greedy determination to rob his brothers and sisters of the land their father had given them.

Sancho went ahead anyway and El Cid had little choice but to help him.

Sancho stole all 3 of his brothers' lands and Alfonso escaped with his life and went to seek safety and sanctuary in Zamora which his sister Dona Urrace ruled.

Sickened by Sancho's conduct, El Cid tried to persuade him not to take Zamora by force.

"Sire this is your sister" counselled El Cid. "You surely cannot wish to harm her. You have taken the lands which your father gave to your 3 brothers. They are beaten and you now have a large kingdom. Is it not enough?"

Sancho refused to listen and his army went ahead and laid siege to Zamora, not allowing anyone in or out of the city and refusing to allow any food in.

## .....**The Death of Sancho**.....

El Cid pleaded with Sancho to be allowed to negotiate a surrender from Dona Urrace and Alfonso.

“Sire, let me go to your sister and plead with her to leave Zamorra peaceably and without bloodshed”

Sancho allowed El Cid to go and seek a surrender from his sister. It was agreed that a man representing Sancho’s sister Dona Urrace and Alfonso would come out and discuss her surrender to Sancho.

The plan backfired because the man sent out to speak with Sancho was an assassin and he stabbed and murdered him.

It seemed clear that Alfonso had played a part in his brother’s murder. El Cid was devastated by Sancho’s death and that is what gave him the courage to kneel before his new king and ask the shocking question “did you kill your brother?”

King Alfonso had little choice but to defend his honour. He stood in the church of Santa Gadea in Burgos and, with his hands on the altar, he swore not once but 3 times that he had played no part in the murder of his brother Sancho.

El Cid accepted King Alfonso’s word and swore his loyal service to him.

On the surface King Alfonso was friendly towards El Cid and gave him high office as Campeador - leader of the armed forces.

Privately Alfonso seethed with anger.

## .....**All Hail King Alfonso**.....

Alfonso had been deeply humiliated when El Cid asked him to swear his innocence and who knows, perhaps his conscience was troubled too.

In those days, the leaders of smaller and weaker lands were obliged to pay tributes (fines) to their stronger more powerful neighbours. Failure to pay led to threats of force. The King of Seville owed tributes to King Alfonso and here was an opportunity for Alfonso to get revenge. He sent El Cid and his men to Seville to collect the debt. El Cid did as instructed and he returned to court with the money owed to Alfonso.

But no, the tributes should have been greater. El Cid’s enemies whispered that he must have decided to steal some of the money for himself. This accusation went against the honest nature and integrity of El Cid but Alfonso used the false charge as an excuse to banish EL Cid from the kingdom. This was a harsh punishment.

El Cid had to leave his wife and 2 daughters behind as he went into exile with a group of loyal followers.

His banishment was received with great sorrow by the Spanish people who loved their great hero and champion.

In order to live, El Cid became a soldier of fortune, offering his services to one master and then to another. He was always successful as he led his men into battle after battle. El Cid added over and over to his reputation as a fearless knight who led his men with great courage and often showed compassion to his beaten enemies.

When King Alfonso had problems at home he sent for El Cid, and the loyal knight went to his King's aid, despite the way he had been treated. Alfonso's warm welcome didn't last and soon enough El Cid was banished again, this time with no money and his family in prison.

Disgraced and poor, El Cid had to earn money by offering his fighting skills where he could. He rescued the city of Valencia which was being starved into surrender by the Moors.

El Cid drove the Moors out of the city, restored peace and decided to make the city his home. He showed compassion and mercy to the beaten Moors and, after sending for his family, El Cid lived in Valencia for the rest of his life.

## ..... **After his death** .....

El Cid died in 1099 killed, it is said, by a poisoned arrow.

Just before he died El Cid gave a strange instruction to his wife and closest men. He knew that a Moorish army was preparing to attack Valencia and he wanted to lead his army one more time. The Moors gathered outside the city knew that El Cid was dying and they believed his men would be easier to beat without El Cid leading them.

El Cid died and in line with his last request, he was tied into the saddle of his favourite horse Babieca. His sword the Tizona was tied into his hand and he led his men one last time. The Moors were terrified when they saw El Cid and they retreated, chased away by El Cid's army.

El Cid was a real knight in 11th century Spain and he has earned his place in history. El Cid was a soldier, tough and brave. He was also a loyal servant of his King and a great leader of men. He lives on as a national hero in Spain.

## El Cid — Glossary

### Characters

El Cid	nobleman and military leader
King Alfonso	King of León and King of Castile
Sancho	Alfonso's brother
Donna Urrace	Alfonso's sister
Ferdinand	Alfonso's father
The Moors	Muslim of the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages
Sword of Tizona	El Cid's weapon

### The Story

allegiance	the loyalty of a person or group to a cause, government or ruler
banishment	to be exiled or expelled from a country or region
counsel	formal advice
devastate	to cause great shock or grief
humiliate	to make some feel ashamed or foolish by insulting their pride
seethe	to be particularly angry
sicken	to make someone feel disgusted
swore something	to have made a solemn promise to do something or confirm something