

## PalaDiary Day 1: Why am I a Paladin?

For day one of my 30-day challenge, I wanted to get at a basic summary of all the factors and bits and pieces that added up to me identifying, archetypally, as a paladin. They're arranged vaguely by time and category but a lot of these things overlap and intersect. Also, many of them, will be elaborated on in more detail in future days through the month, this is an overview.

### **Personality Traits**

I am overall a soft, group-oriented person. I'm socially submissive. I have a strong sense of loyalty and diligence. (You can see where these overlap with dog traits). Whether due to neurodivergence or something else, I have a rigid and rule-abiding personality. I suspect it's inherent (genetic or neural) because my parents have literally said they don't know where it came from/it's not something they taught me. I'm direct. As flaws go, I'm also pretty judgmental and . These traits are both good and bad in different contexts, they're just who I am. A lot of these traits are commonly expressed in the paladin archetype- the loyal knight, or, in negative cases, the judgmental templar.

### **Moral Values**

Overlapping with personality traits, I have a firm moral sense. I'm high-minded in both positive and negative valences. I'm "Lawful Good" to use fictional alignments. I value honesty and kindness. I engage in acts of service. I believe people have a duty to one another, that I am responsible for presenting my best self to those around me.

### **Religious Experience**

While my family was not religious, I grew up in a Catholic/Christian environment. Again (likely due to neurodivergence) I took it very literally and deeply, in ways that were both meaningful and hurtful/traumatic to me. There was a significant period of time I seriously questioned being angelkin. While I don't identify as Christian now, the experiences left a mark on my sense of self and way of thinking about the world.

### **Career Choice**

I have wanted to be in a helping profession for as long as I can remember. At first, I thought medicine, mostly because I was already familiar and comfortable with hospitals. Though my education, I settled on psychotherapy and counseling. This was a choice I made long before calling myself a paladin, but being a counselor feels like a satisfying way to incorporate my paladinhood into my career.

### **Fictional Experiences**

There are several characters and tropes that, throughout my life, have particularly spoken to me. *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (Roger Lancelyn Greene) was the first example I can think of. The Narnia books also presented an ideal of chivalrous knighthood. As an adult, characters like Michael from the *Dresden Files* or Pearl from *Steven Universe* resonated with me. An avid troper, I recognized that I was drawn repeatedly to the tropes of The Paragon and The Champion.

I played a Paladin in a college game of D&D for practical, stats-based reasons. But in doing so, I discovered that the character class hit a lot of personal buttons for me (most of those listed above). It resonated with me. It was a vehicle for expressing my values, my complex religious relationship, my love of knights, my deep-set personality. Finding the word 'paladin' was like finding a form-fitting outfit. All the traits that fit it existed before, but now I had a word that named their overall shape.

### **Personal Choices**

Once I had the Paladin label, I chose to embrace it more directly and literally. This involved a lot of different things. Some were shallow, like buying paladin-themed merchandise. Some were much more serious, such as training to become a street medic (so I could both heal and fight). I made not one but two personal moral codes to assess my paladin-hood and encourage myself to act in accordance to it, day to day.

### **Overall Summary**

So is my paladin identity voluntary or involuntary? Yes. Some aspects of it (like my personality traits) are innate, and some (like my religious upbringing) were experiential but not chosen. But, once I found the paladin label, I made deliberate and conscious choices to not only embrace it but expand upon it (like street medic training). If dog/faun/human are the material my being is made out of, then 'paladin' is the shape those materials take. Why bother with the word? Why not just say I'm a conscientious, rigid, leftist, ex-Catholic counselor and street medic who likes knight stories? Well, like any label, it acts as a shorthand for a larger picture. And my personal take on archetypes is that they describe patterns, types and roles. Paladin is my embodied role. It's not socially recognized the way a job-role like "Counselor" is, but nevertheless reflects something about me and my life path.