

Protecting Our Order, Part 3

Kurt Vonnegut writes in his 1962 classic *Mother Night*, “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” As members of E Clampus Vitus we are many things; writers, historians, tradesmen, teachers, volunteers, community leaders, and a vast array of other noble positions. We are men whose purpose within this honorable organization is to come together in a social aspect, preserve history, and to work to improve our communities. We are also men who are passionate about things such as politics, religion, other social groups, and other hobbies that lie beyond the definitions and purpose of E Clampus Vitus. The duality of who we are within this organization gives depth and purpose to the many individuals that make up the greater order. Yet as a means of protecting our great and noble order, we must be mindful to not overlap outside elements that may be destructive to the overall purpose and focus of E Clampus Vitus.

The current culture of our society has polarized political standings, and often makes enemies out of friends. E Clampus Vitus sits in contrast to this and often allows us to escape the norms of society and opens a forum which allows us to discuss politics in an open manner. Disagreements and counter beliefs are often heard around late night campfires, and rarely do we walk away from each other enemies. Yet political symbols seem to have a growing presence throughout clampsites. When simple symbols such as flags become political symbols, they have a tendency to create tensions and division within our order. Another great aspect of E Clampus Vitus is that it permits us to “poke the bear” and allows us to put bits of our personality out on display in a world that may otherwise silence our voice. However, we must look at intent and the overall weight that these things have on this order. We are not a political or religious organization, and we are open to all men regardless of their stance of these things. We must ask ourselves each time that we display such things, “Is this in the best interest of E Clampus Vitus, and are we as an organization benefiting from this?”

Another outside element that often seems to seep into our culture and blur the lines of what we represent is membership in motorcycle clubs. This is not to say that MCs are bad. It is to say that E Clampus Vitus is not an MC, and pretending differently can become a dangerous game. To bring MC culture into our world through patches and symbols that mimic a world that we should not be a part of can create a bear that bites back when poked. There needs to be a clear line drawn between these two very different worlds. One way of approaching this establishment of separation is having equal respect for both worlds. If you are in an MC, don’t wear your “cut,” (it should be noted that in E Clampus Vitus, we wear vests, and the term “cut” is a term that should remain in MC culture and not overlap into our culture) at any E Clampus Vitus event, and E Clampus Vitus “vests” should not be worn at MC events. The presence of cultural overlap at events can easily associate all E Clampus Vitus members with organizations and clubs that we don’t wish to be associated. It is understood that there are MCs that are closely aligned with E Clampus Vitus, but it is well established that those MCs should not have anything that represents ECV on their “cuts.” Of these groups, when deciding what should be worn at an E Clampus

Vitus event, again the question should be asked, “Is this in the best interest of E Clampus Vitus, and are we as an organization benefiting from this?”

Beyond the perimeters of E Clampus Vitus events, we must also carry ourselves as the men that we want to be seen as in public. It is sad that there are places within our borders that E Clampus Vitus “paraphernalia” is not allowed to be worn due to it being associated as a gang. Many chapters have worked hard to be pillars within their communities, and due to the actions of members, who should not have been brought into this organization, we suffer as an organization. Many PBC history lessons throughout our organization warn that if a member needs to fight, or be, for lack of a better term, a child, they should remove their redshirt, and all association with E Clampus Vitus. This message needs to be reestablished to our general membership. While wearing a redshirt, driving with an E Clampus Vitus sticker, or displaying a tattoo of this organization, we should be questioning all of our actions with, “Is this in the best interest of E Clampus Vitus, and are we as an organization benefiting from this?”

We are not a political or religious group, we are not a motorcycle club, and we are not outlaws or a gang, so we must stop pretending to be these things, or the communities we live within will start to view us as the men we are not. When symbols of these groups and organizations are displayed at E Clampus Vitus events they become the face of the whole organization to the outside world. When we stand beyond the boundaries of E Clampus Vitus events with the symbols of our order, we are the face of E Clampus Vitus. We are many things as men outside of E Clampus Vitus, but when we come to represent this great historical fraternity, we are men of dignity, pride, honor, and respect.