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The Popes Speak Out on Scouting

Scouting & Youth	Bibliography		Miscellanea
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Since 1913, when Pope Pius X gave his apostolic blessing to the Belgian Baden-Powell Boy and Sea Scouts, every pontiff has made public statements regarding Scouting. Starting with Pope Pius XI, these statements have been uniformly positive. I plan to include these, as well as others, in my book.

Below are a few of those papal messages.

Pope Pius XI ⁽¹⁾

If we understand anything that relates to your scoutship, it is that there are two signs characteristic of the good and brave Scout, and in these two signs are summed up all others that might be mentioned. These are prudence and courage.

Prudence, industrious, watchful, quick, scrupulous, resourceful and observant! Courage, that is to say, that state of soul which fears nothing save God and evil; God, and that which offends Him, that darkens at the same time the nobility and dignity of the scout. And so there are these two qualities, this prudence and this courage, which you must carry into your Catholic life and profession. Thus, being Catholic Scouts, you will then become Scout Catholics!

Pope Pius XI ⁽²⁾

To the Scouts on the International Scout Pilgrimage to Rome

Beloved Sons -- This Holy Year, in the eight months that have already passed away have given us great consolations, great for the heart that felt them, and great and splendid for the eye that beheld them. Yet more of such consolations (for which we are debtors to the infinite mercy of God and to the devotion of our good children) still await us. But certainly it is, that the consolations that you give to the heart and to the eyes of your Communion Father with the spectacle of your filial devotion is, without doubt, among the finest and most welcome, and in certain respects, not easily to be exceeded, and certainly up to the present moment at least, unsurpassed. We see before us near to Our view and close to Our heart, rank after rank of so many of our sons come from so many quarters, not only from Italy but from many other countries, and not only from countries near at hand

you, beloved sons, in a manner peculiarly your own--peculiarly filial--(on account of place you hold in the universal Catholic family), make Us feel all the sweetness of the universal paternity which from the Heart of God we felt descending into Our own heart that day, when, through the secret designs of Providence, we were called to the height of the Apostolic Ministry.

The unity and universality of this family, the catholicity of the Church, is made visible and tangible by your presence here. You have made Us see and feel it, in a quite new manner by that particular throb of youthful and boyish devotion which you carry with you wherever you go. For you are not only sons come from all parts; you are dear, most beloved sons who had to show energy, discipline, fatigue and perhaps suffering and sacrifice to come here and meet your Father. We rejoice profoundly, for your presence which has come about in such a manner, is a generous profession of faith, attachment and devotion to the Vicar of Christ; of faith, attachment and devotion to the ancient Church of Rome.

In the spiritual family you are the youth, the hope of the future -- generous, blooming, full of vigour -- the hope of religion and the Church, as that of the family and the Fatherland. The more We consider the event, the greater is Our joy and consolation seeing you. For, little children, we know what kindness there was in the tender Heart of Jesus; nay--we might say even the tenderness of a mother's heart rather than a father's. But when He meets with youth (as with you), with the first bloom of youth in their countenance, and the vigour of life in their smile, then indeed His Heart is moved with special tenderness.

Of the Apostles, John, the youngest, was the best beloved. The Divine Master had no secrets from him, and to him was granted what was never given to others, to rest his head on the sacred breast of the Redeemer. When Jesus met a young man full of noble desires, inflamed with good and holy inspirations, in a magnificent phrase the Gospel says, "looking on him, He loved him,"-- He gazed on him with the deepest affection of His divine Heart.

When He meets one such youth, snatched away by death, an especial pity extended to his sorrowing mother, overwhelmed Him, and he performs one of the most beautiful of the miracles that the Evangelists love to narrate, and describe in words truly divine. when He brings him back from death to life, to restore him to his mother, He addresses him by a name suitable to his age, by a name applicable to you, my dear sons, "Young man, I say to thee, arise!"

We have before Us here gathered in you young men, a chosen band, a very comely and strong body. And you are such, not only because you are Catholic boys, but also because you are young Catholic Boy Scouts, Catholic Scouts--this is of no slight significance. One who well considers and can appreciate the meaning of these words, "Scout" --not every boy can be a Scout, and although the energy of youth is manifold (its very vastness indeed is quite fantastic) not all are Boy Scouts. Many there are of easier, of quieter, less strenuous ways of life. A Boy Scout must have an ever-ready command of energy

of courage, of calmness and of reflection. And a Catholic Boy Scout must have a profound sense of God, of His divine law, of His Divine Presence, which harmonizes the wonders of nature, and discovers to us its most obscure and hidden details, its secrets, and its precious lessons.

We have said: Strength and Courage. To see you is to be convinced that you do not lack either the one or the other. And we well know that both of them are so necessary to the Scouts. But strength and courage alone are not sufficient for the Catholic Scout. In the Mass which we celebrated this morning, and at which you assisted with your prayers, there occurs a passage from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians which you ought to read again and again. In that Epistle the Apostle tells us, that nature of itself, is not sufficient, but the spirit also is necessary, courage and material forces are of themselves unavailing. Saint Paul says where matter is predominant, violence, intemperance and uncleanness hold sway. But on the other hand, where the spirit predominates are to be found all the sweetnesses of charity with all the graces of purity. It would appear that the words had been especially written for you, for in them you will find that which should be the splendour and glory of your life. Strength and courage not only to explore the extremities of the earth, to traverse arduous paths, but rather to mold the will and to subject the flesh to the spirit to direct it in the path of duty even when duty is hard and demands sacrifices, whether by reason of adverse circumstances, or by reason of its intrinsic difficulties. The courageous and strong Catholic Boy Scout knows well the path he should take, knows well the path traced out for him by Duty.

Calm and reflection. Your calling does not consist in seeking after foolish adventures, but in the training of the spirit to the most arduous tasks. The spirit must be continually fortified and strengthened for this struggle. During our life there is constant need of spiritual energy to enable us to do good and to fight against evil. And for this reason strength and reflection fit a man for his proper sphere, for the sphere assigned to him by God. The wonders of creation. Beloved sons, it is necessary to know how to strive towards God and it is impossible to imagine a Catholic Boy Scout who is not inspired and guided by the thought of this necessity. Truly it is a thought that ought to accompany and guide every man by the way that comes from God and leads to God. But the Catholic Boy Scout who knows that beyond this visible world, there is another and invisible world, of a surpassing beauty visible creation is but a pallid reflection, will have no difficulty in striving towards God in having always in mind that inspiring thought of God to illuminate his whole life with a wonderful refulgence. Considered in such a way the wonders of nature furnish greater depths and sublimities of thought. The whole of nature is animated by a double life, it speaks a double language. It is, as it were, a divine atmosphere, that enshrouds all things, pervades all things, rendering them sublime and gives to all creatures from the lowliest to the highest a voice and an office; that voice and office intended for them in the mind of the Creator.

It is well to read the Gospel of today's Mass (that was so well chosen for your meeting dear sons), and learn from the divinely profound, and picturesque words of the Creator Himself, how the language of nature may and ought to be heard and understood, even such little creatures as the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. (Matt. vi. 24-33.)

In Our own personal experience We have seen those whose physical appearance made them as athletes, but their spiritual formation was not of similar calibre. We have seen them cast down and lose heart when face to face with even minor difficulties. We have seen them unaffected by the most soul-stirring spectacles of nature. On the other hand We have seen simple-minded men, the open-hearted sons of the mountains, men of faith, who knew well their Christian catechism, confronted by the wonders of nature when the last vestiges of snow melts on the mountains, and the temperature grows milder, and the winds come as harbingers of new life, and all takes on a new aspect, splendour and magnificence; then have We seen them with tears in their eyes fall on their knees and bless God. Yes, We have seen them, and together with them have We prayed, adoring the power of the Almighty.

Dear Catholic Boy Scouts, We wish you always to follow faithfully the magnificent ideal of Faith, "Christian and Catholic," which you have come to Rome to revivify and which you now demonstrate so eloquently. You have come to Rome to search out (and in this you exercise your qualities as Scouts) those spiritual treasures which We have given abundantly to the whole world in this Holy Year of Jubilee. You have come to seek truth at the heart of Ancient Rome, your mother. You have come to visit the Holy Roman Basilicas, kindling admiration in all hearts by your pious and edifying bearing. You have come here to occupy a prominent position in the universal spectacle of faith, of piety, of religion, of devotion, of prayer, with which the Holy Year gladdens Our beloved city of Rome, with increased intensity day by day.

After having played your part in this magnificent display, you have desired to put the finishing touches to this act of filial piety by extending to the Father of all a share in this intimate and purest spiritual joy. You have come as most affectionate children to ask Our Blessing.

Beloved sons, Our Lord is witness to the gratitude We feel towards you for this act of devotion. We do not doubt that you who have come to Rome in circumstances so joyful and holy will return to your homes bearing away from this sacred soil every spiritual benefit. Here you Yourself have been joined together in a holy union of mind with your brothers from the whole world, here you have seen the Apostolic Tradition living and working; here you have seen the brightness of Sanctity, shining forth in the canonization of so many holy ones, whom God has given Us to proclaim among His Saints; here you have found the Church One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic. You have visited the sacred Basilicas which rise up in the splendours of the Roman sun. But those Basilicas rise on soil drenched with the blood of the martyrs. Beneath those Basilicas lie winding passages of the Catacombs, with their darkness, so strangely full of splendour and of light, which one might say with truth, radiate those rays which have attracted so many to Rome in this wonderful year. When, therefore, you return home from this wonderful place, it will be with more profound conviction, and with increasingly firm will, that you will repeat the sacred words of the creed: I believe in the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

May you then be blessed a thousand and a thousand times, you who have come, as many of your brothers came, from Terra del Fuego, from the Cape of Good Hope, from

Iceland, from Australia, and from every other far-distant land. For you, what is there We would not wish to do? We will at least give you a little souvenir, and, since We can place it in your hands personally as We would wish to do, We will do so through the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Catholic Scouts in Italy, one who has deserved so well of them. It is a small medal, such as we have already given to all pilgrims who have come to this Eternal City, and which has thus, in this short time, been carried to the ends of the earth. Let this medal be a reminder, not only of the Holy Jubilee, not only of this happy hour, but above all, of the strong and holy resolutions which you have formed in the past days, and let it be a spur to practice them with ever increasing faithfulness and generosity.

And now may the Blessing of God descend upon each and all of you, upon all who have the charge of you, to lead and guide you in the paths of virtue, on all that which you have most at heart; may it descend on your relatives and family, upon your parents, whose love and hope you are, on your younger brothers and sisters, and the little ones, on the aged, the feeble, the sick in your homes, who perhaps envy you your bounding youth and energy. And finally, We would express in your regard a wish inspired by what We read of the first Scout to be mentioned in the foremost of the world's books. Caleb was eight and a half years old when Moses ordered him and Joshua to explore the Promised Land, beyond the limits of the desert. Caleb, at that advanced age, reminded Joshua of an exploration, which they themselves had carried out quite forty-five years previously, and declared himself ready to act with the same energy as formerly.

Such is Our wish to each one of you. And the greater will be your vigour, your strength and your nobility of character in later years, the more faithfully you attend now to your ideals and your duties as Catholic Boy Scouts, the more faithfully you continue to place the spiritual above the material, and to subject the material to the spiritual, and the more completely you place the thought of God and the lessons of the Faith above all other thoughts, and above all other lessons.

And with Our Blessing may you receive the Blessing of God and all the inestimable riches of His Treasures.

Pope Pius XII⁽³⁾

During September 1946 the Associazione Scautistica Cattolica Italiana (A.S.C.I.) held their National Conference and Camp for the first time since their revival.

In anticipation of these meetings, His Holiness plus XII sent a message through the Secretariat of State to the Chief Chaplain of the Association. The following is a translation of the text of the letter as reported in *L'Osservatore Romano* of September 5th, 1946.

To the Scouters

The Sovereign Pontiff has learned with fatherly joy that the heads of the Italian Catholic Scout Association are preparing shortly to hold their twelfth General Council following a meeting of the Chaplains and Scouters and by a camp at which Catholic Scouts from

parts of Italy will be present.

Those who are to take part in these events expressed a desire to go up to the Pope's residence at Castel Gandolfo to pay him their filial respect. His Holiness granted this desired that they should have his blessing at the very beginning of their activities.

The Holy Father, in his affection for youth and interest in their education, fully realizes the importance of these gatherings. The General Council has, in fact, to revise and bring up to date the rules of the Association, which have been of the highest utility in the past but which may be improved in several points.

The meetings of the Scouters, and after that the Scout camps, are intended to strengthen the Christian family spirit, which endears the Scout Association to everyone, both by its brotherly cordiality and by the restrained rivalry which are characteristic of these occasions.

The Holy Father is gladdened by the happy visit of so many boys to Rome, a visit which will show with what generous help the Association is welcomed and followed up. In order to come up to the expectations of their superiors, the heads of the A.S.C.I. must make every effort: that their aspirations, now that it has made a fresh start, may flourish in every way possible.

Let their care be to dig deep by shaping steady and strong characters in young men who will be capable of resisting the frivolous attractions of the world, and who will be prepared to show themselves self-possessed in every emergency.

Let them teach others first and foremost by their example (this should influence first even those young men who know little about Jesus Christ), and then by all other means at their disposal, that according to their method of education, rightly understood in a Catholic sense, the real joy of living does not come from empty and evil pleasures, but from serving God in things simple and good, in games that are not harmful, but rather recreative, in love of the beauties of nature, even in the humdrum duties of school and workshop, in manly striving, kept up day by day, to preserve and increase God's grace in themselves, even if this costs them labour and sacrifice.

Let them not weary of holding up before their young men the noble ideal of being of service to their neighbor.

Above all the Holy Father, whose heart has been so much pained by the selfishness and hatred which characterized the war, longs for the return of peace and love, and that all may at last consider themselves brothers.

Let it therefore be the ambition of the A.S.C.I., from the chiefs down to the smallest Council, to bring back love among men by giving an example of generous unselfishness, of widespread brotherly collaboration with all the Catholic Youth organizations, of new schemes for helping those who are in need.

And since the Scouts frequently come in contact with Scout Associations of other countries and sometimes of other creeds, let them put into these fraternal rallies all the force of the true Catholic spirit, which sees in men the divine image of Christ and win all for Christ.

This is a tremendous plan of campaign, which demands the fullest energy. No one can expect it to be carried through in the space of a few months. It is the work of years and will require the practical and intelligent collaboration of all who are interested in education. And precisely because of its varied complexity, the Scouters must introduce this programme into everyday life, not by haphazard and sporadic schemes, but with plans worked out with serious scientific art and with constant methodical labor which aims at conquests ever wider, but never hurried.

Moreover, it will be realized quite naturally that work of this kind, especially in a Scout organization, will bear fruit only if the Scouters are well trained, both technically and spiritually. In these days it would be more than ever dangerous if the heads of an institution which renders such service both to society and to the Church should lead a halfhearted Christian life without interior strength. We need men severe with themselves, of a solid piety, who come to know truth through prayer and reflection, who live the life of grace through the sacraments, who set an open example of straightforwardness with faithful loyalty to the Church and fearless proclamation of their Faith.

Only on these conditions will boys and young men, who often know the real good when they see it better than grownup men themselves, place confidence in their chiefs and follow up their teaching.

Finally, the Holy Father calls down rich heavenly blessings on all these devoted sons of his, Chaplains, Scouters and Scouts, who so often and with such praiseworthy keenness have wished to visit him and to be numbered amongst the Church's most faithful servants. May this blessing descend on all Scouts both in Italy and in the rest of the world.

To the Scouts

The Pope interrupted his brief holiday at Castel Gandolfo to receive in audience some 4,000 Boy Scouts; the majority of these were members of the A.S.C.I., but there were amongst them Scouts from Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium. The throne was fittingly set in the open air in the shade of the trees, and the Scouts with their Scoutmasters and other leaders stood in a semicircle facing the throne. After the address, the Holy Father received many of the Commissioners and Scouters, and then walked amongst the boys. To them he spoke as follows:

We salute you, dear sons, as bearers of peace, who wish to make plain the road towards reciprocal confidence, to neighborliness and to the concord of souls.

What are the reasons which have conduced towards the rapid spread of the Scout Movement throughout the world? It seems that there are three principal reasons to

which this may be attributed.

Scouting reveals to youth and puts into action all that is naturally good, noble, health, simplicity of life, love of nature, love of country, the sentiment of honor, self-discipline, obedience, dedication to the service of others in the spirit of fraternity and chivalry.

Scouting aims at bringing order and right measure into human life. Love of nature, but divorced from fantastic and unhealthy sentimentalism. So your recreations, your treks and your games place on each individual Scout special duties and responsibilities and they come only as the fulfillment of a strong and voluntary activity in school, in office, or in your work. Your very holiday is only the reward of a Year of serious and attentive work.

Scouting gives to the worship and service of God that pre-eminent place that it ought to have in human life, and in this itself disposes boys to see in all objects, in all rules, in all virtues, in all beautiful things their own true value, their own true splendor in the light of the Divine Sun.

To seek, to find, to taste, to glorify God in all His works, to see all creation in the light which illuminates it, this it is which should constitute the foundation of your lives as Scouts.

Your association desires men united with God, men in whom religious feeling permeates all the acts of their lives as individuals and as members of society. Even the most noble and elevated souls among you cannot always be true and loyal, always be just and good towards others, always honest and pure without the help of divine grace.

Above all, then, without this help you will not be able to remain constantly fresh and immune from the turbid waves of shameful seduction. These are breaking in all forms, open and secret even on the good and healthy Italian people and on its courageous and noble-hearted youth, and poison and corrupt the deepest springs of its vigor, marriage and the Christian family, and take away from you the blessing of God, of which in the Present time there is more than ever need.

But the help of God's grace is granted to all those who humbly raise their hands and hearts to our Lord, and to whoever prays and attains from the supernatural fountain of grace power to think and act always holy.

Your association has for its motto, 'Be Prepared,' which means to say, Be always ready to do your duty. We would wish to give to these words another meaning wider and more profound. *Be ready at every instant to fulfill conscientiously the will of God and to obey His Commandments.*

Be ready, above all, for the moment, which God alone knows, in which our Lord will require of you to render an account of the talents with which you have been endowed; which means to say, both the graces and supernatural gifts, and the gifts of soul and body which He has heaped upon you, that you may use them for His glory, your good, and the good of your fellows.

But from that it follows that to be always truly faithful to Your ideals as Catholic Scouters amidst the so many errors that to-day cloud and lead astray the minds and hearts, you must always maintain alive the flame of your faith and the fire of your love.

Let the flame of your faith be always a lamp burning bright and splendid. This, beloved sons, is the principle and the purpose and the secret of all true life. If you form yourselves in this spirit you will become men of such a kind as your Church and your country can securely build upon.

Pope Pius XII [\(4\)](#)

An address to the Seventh International Congress of Catholic Scouting, June 7, 1952

You have chosen Rome, dear sons, as the meeting place for the International Conference of Catholic Scouting. It is the first time that your national directors have met in the Eternal City. You are, moreover, to discuss a subject here whose choice has brought close to the Vicar of Christ: "The Apostolate in and through Scouting." Eager to reply to the pressing appeals we have addressed to all Catholics, you are willing to accept all responsibilities which the Church's apostolate involves. That is a noble and generous resolution, in complete conformity with the spirit of scouting.

Everyone knows that religion has held the first place in scouting from the start, but you are also aware of the added strength and precision given by Catholicism to the educational work you pursue. For you, it is not merely a question of training better citizens, more active, more devoted to the common good of the Temporal City; you also train better sons of the Church. In the Catholic Church, the mission of the apostolate goes down from the priests to the faithful; and, in our days, all the faithful are called upon to collaborate, each according to his capacity, in this apostolate.

It is true that boys are not old enough to take part in the organized apostolate, but they must be prepared for it.

The experience of 30 years has amply shown the formative value of scouting. How many great Christians, heroes and leaders, how many vocations to the religious life and the priesthood have been born within the troops. Fighting aberrations with zeal you have constantly revised methods and recalled principles. If the scout loves nature, it is not as an egoist or a dilettante; nor does he enjoy merely space, pure air, silence, the beauty of the countryside. If he develops a taste for simplicity, for a healthy ruggedness in preference to the artificial life of the town and the slavery of mechanized civilization, it is not to escape the obligations of civil life. If he cultivates the best of friendships in a selected group, it is not to refuse contacts or neglect to render service. On the contrary, nothing could be further from his ideal. If he likes concrete realities, it is not that he despises ideas or books. He is careful to educate himself fully in so far as talent allows; necessity demands.

In attaining this end, the promise to observe the Scout Law, with God's help, is a powerful lever raising young people above weakness and temptation. Based on the

foundation of the natural law, the Scout Law, by inducing endeavor, by the daily practice of voluntary good deeds, calls for the rectitude and loyalty young people so earnestly desire, and are happy to be helped in maintaining firmly. The Scout Law makes them detest deceit, falsehood and dissimulation. Feeling their strength grow, young people generous by nature: they want to fight, stand up to difficulties they feel the need of giving, of giving themselves, of going beyond themselves. In the open-air life and the quest of manual skills they find nourishment suited to their age. Favored by the mood of such an atmosphere, purity is assured and gives their energy a Christian reserve and delicacy.

Who could deny the fitness of such a training in a civilization dominated by selfishness, defiance, cowardice and unbridled love of pleasure?

The first thing scouts must do in their apostolate is to give a good example in the training themselves, individually or collectively, they are already at the service of the Church, forming the weapon they will use in their future apostolate. The wider, the deeper the foundations they lay, the more solid and imposing the edifice of their future lives as followers of Christ. The greater the radiance of their virtue, the more they will be called upon to work for the glory of God and the honor of the Church.

From a tender age, the scouts' training must prepare, by concrete and suitable methods of observation and reflection, for the social, natural and supernatural realities. Scouts must learn to live in modern society. For this, they must be wisely instructed about its structure, its good points and its faults. Especially, they must prepare themselves to play an influential and responsible part, as far as they are able, in their milieu and in the parish community. The training of character, which is the object of scouting, must be directed toward social and apostolic work. It must train the scout to serve his neighbor both in his personal contacts and also, where those of temporal and religious institutions are concerned.

The love scouts always have had for the Divine Person of the Great Leader, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, must be their light and strength in their efforts day by day.

This is what We wholeheartedly ask Him, so that, on the day they are called upon to assume their responsibilities, He will find them prepared. From today on, may the grace implored by Our Apostolic Blessing descend upon you here present, on all the national groups you represent, on the leaders, the chaplains and all scouts.

Pope John XXIII ⁽⁵⁾

Letter to the Chaplains of the Association of Catholic Boy Scouts in Italy. May 2, 1958

We are happy to assure you that We are present in spirit at the proceedings of the General Council of the Association of Catholic Boy Scouts in Italy and We send Our cordial greeting and good wishes to the participants.

It gives Us fatherly satisfaction to draw attention to this deserving association's noble

aspirations, its energetic activity, and its growth. It is a school of wholesome and competent preparation for life, with the purpose of forming Young men, from childhood on, into adults of character who will be loyal citizens, well trained in discipline, hard to sacrifice, and above all, good Christians aspiring to virtuous lives, active in charity devoted to the Church, eager to bear witness to their faith.

For so generous an undertaking We wish increasingly effective progress to the benefit of those cherished young souls, so that they may be educated to a sense of responsibility and faithfulness in their religious, family, and social duties. We are confident that the zeal of the ecclesiastical assistants and the self-sacrifice of the directors will be crowned with new and consoling fruits. Supporting Our hopes with fervent prayers to God, with all Our heart We impart the desired Apostolic Benediction to you, the Chief Ecclesiastical Assistant, to your aides, and to those assembled here, and We gladly extend it to the entire family of the Catholic Explorers of Italy as a token of abundant graces from heaven.

Pope Paul VI

Special message to the Scouts the 11th World Jamboree ⁽⁶⁾

"While thousands of Scouts from the whole world are gathered at this moment on the shores of Lake Marathona for their traditional jamboree, Our heart goes out to them with paternal affection. Following the example of Our recent predecessors, We invoke with a heart full of affection the protection of Almighty God on their great world assembly.

"Having known the Scout movement very closely for a long time past, We appreciate the educational qualities of this magnificent association and its ability to develop the best elements of personality in the souls of young men.

"Among these elements are: respect for honor and loyalty, the service of one's fellow men in a spirit of fraternal devotion, training in physical and moral courage through a discipline voluntarily accepted. All these are human values which Christianity has always recognized as its own and which it has always encouraged. To see this ideal shared and practiced throughout the world by an increasing number of young people gives Us cause for profound joy and firm hope."

And "... It is such men as these that the world needs today more than ever.

"Therefore, my dear Scouts of the 11th jamboree, dedicate your efforts and your hopes toward looking always higher and always farther. Look higher than the easy life of the modern cities, higher than the material interests of pleasure, where too many souls are debased! Look farther afield than the narrow calculations of individual selfishness, than the petty rivalries of race, language, and nations.

"May your 'great game of friendship,' the symbol of the spirit which inspires you, help toward overcoming the artificial barriers raised between men or ethnic groups. May it be for all of you an inducement to move forward along the paths of universal brotherhood which was taught by Christ and based on the recognition of the one and only and

Almighty God, the Father of all men!"

Continuing the Pope stated: "Your jamboree is being held also at a time which coincides with the Ecumenical Council, at an historical moment when an immense desire rises from souls to put an end to centuries-old divisions. May you know how to recognize the breath of the Spirit and be inspired by it.

"To Our beloved sons, the Catholic Scouts, to their brothers of all nations gathered here, to them on the Plains of Marathon, to the organizers of this great event, and finally to the Venerable Brother [Archbishop Benediktos Printesis of Athens], go Our cordial greetings. Our congratulations, Our wishes and Our Apostolic Benediction."

At Castel Gandolfo, Pope Paul VI urged a group of Scouts to prepare for the future by developing the "qualities of leadership upon which the Scout movement lays so much stress."

He continued, "We are confident that We understand the significance and the importance of your Boy Scout movement ... Your Scout Oath and your Scout Law, which We know very well, keep ever before your eyes the grave responsibilities which are yours."

And then, "Tomorrow, you and others like you," he said, "will be the leaders of your countries, and it is necessary that you prepare yourselves now for this task."

"... To be good citizens, you must first recognize your relationship to God Who is the Father of all mankind. We are all His children and therefore brothers of one another. Remembering this, you will always strive to do what; is best for yourselves and for your neighbor, and in this way you shall be building the foundations for true peace. If you recognize the natural dignity and goodness of others, you will respect their rights."

John Paul II⁽⁷⁾

Homily in Piani di Pezza, Abruzzo, Italy, August 9, 1986.

The sculptural expression just heard from Saint Luke's Gospel, on this pre feast-day celebration, acquires a special meaning when addressed to you, members of the Italian Catholic Scout and Guide Association. Your motto has been taken from the first words "Estote Parati".

You certainly care so much for the image of belts around your hips and oil-lamps lit that its fascination you must have experienced during your trips up in the mountains as you sat by the fires. Its origin comes from the old Jewish custom of rolling up their dresses around their hips for an easier and quicker gait, when setting out for long journeys, especially the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The exodus makes reference to this use when describing the Passover Lamb supper "Thou shalt eat it with Your hips girt on, shoe on your feet, stick in hand: eat it fast" (12,1) A very significant image for you, as it expresses the alert attitude of who sets out

search of God, leading a life of temperance and freedom from the reality that obstructs the spirit, making the way burdensome.

It belongs to scouts who are not fond of a sedentary and quiet life, well aware that God's Kingdom is not made for quitters, inattentive or superficial people that let the occasions for grace placed along their life path by the Providence escape them.

"Estote Parati" your attitude towards God must be like Abraham's readiness and availability, faith and loyalty as it is mentioned in today's second reading: "Moved by faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called by God and set off for a place he was to inherit. Moved by his faith he stayed in the promised land like an alien dwelling in a tent" (Eb 11, 8, 9). Abraham is the explorer for excellence who has bet his life on God's Word, and has waited against all hope, and finally ventured on a risk and unsafe journey "he left without knowing where he would go" (Eb 11, 8). He wagered his life on faith, total surrender to God, faith that did not guarantee anything, that did not follow human logic. Nonetheless, the great Patriarch did not withdraw. On the contrary, he lived by his own faith with no doubt whatsoever, trusting God even if it seemed absurd or paradoxical at first glance. He did it because during his earthly Pilgrimage he never lost sight of the celestial abode- "the architect and constructor is God himself". (Eb 11, 1) Besides, the promised land symbolizes for him a place to be reached beyond the end of this life's end.

Let's hope that Abraham's examples serve you who venture along difficult, unknown and dangerous infested roads, as a stimulus for continuous firmness and perseverance so that obstacles never discourage or overwhelm you.

The mountain trips, the crossroads, camping, the ceremony of commitment, the outdoor Mass service, the songs around the campfire or under the light of the moon are many opportunities that go beyond the simple physical act and become events that leave an unforgettable trace on the soul. Events that stimulate the deep meaning of a person's life, a signal that escapes those absent minded or dazed in a materialistic approach to life.

Only a life spent in close contact with nature teaches and yields a mystical exaltation. That is, the effort, the hard work, and the courage necessary for the choice of a concrete evangelic way of life. The conversion you intend to undergo these days following Paul from Tarso's examples leads down this path.

In this perspective all "human and Christian choices" will be valid and certain because you have learned to overcome the frequent impermeable thickness found in things and human relationships; which apprehends the soul's transparency that enlivens all creations and prepares the souls to get in touch with the supernatural. Roads that lead to Christ's experience. The road to the Tabor and the Emmaus but which passes through the Calvary too. To grow into somebody, or to make something important in life, the passage through suffering and sacrifice is compulsory: "Per Crucem ad lucem".

When I received the proposal to come and meet this big group of 1400 Rovers and

Rangers with whom I am not as familiar as with the little ones, I seemed to apprehend a sort of commandment: you must go because they are the Church. Their presence is and their utmost desire is to bring the human and Christian experience of scouting to the Church. I greet you for what you are and represent, a very precious part of the Italian Church.

I would like to extend my greetings to all the other Churches attending this gathering. The representatives of many countries are among you. I have heard the sounds of French, English, Portuguese and Greek. The Representatives of Burkina Faso (Africa), have come as well and some Japanese participation has been noted also. My welcome is extended to the representative of Turkey too.

Welcome to you all and your guests. I hope you will become a major part a constructive and fully conscious part of the Church.

My dears fellows, being a Christian is a wonderful thing, a great vocation and privilege. One of the fathers of the Church defined a Christian as "Alter Christus".

Being a Christian is an important thing a reliable evidence and a great responsibility. I hope you are Christians in the full and deepest sense of the world, Christians as well as first witnesses of Christ.

We can affirm that the most substantial evangelical and apostolic meaning of Christianity is to be a witness of Christ, who was crucified and rose again".

John Paul II⁽⁸⁾

Speech to the members of the World Scout Committee, Italy, August 1986

"Be exemplary witnesses of the values that you promote"

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome this distinguished group which includes the Secretary General and members of the World Committee of Scouting, representatives of the International Catholic Conference of Scouting and of AGESCI (Italian Catholic Scouts and Guides Association). In line with the many instances in which my predecessors have praised the noble aims of your Movement and its achievements on a worldwide scale since Lord Baden-Powell founded it just over eighty years ago, appreciation of Scouting as a magnificent educational experience and form of social and religious commitment. I am happy to know that today over sixteen million young people of all races, religions and cultures on every continent take part in Scouting activities within the structure of your movement.

In the changing political and social circumstances of the present moment, you are finding new opportunities for a renewed presence of your organization in the countries of central and eastern Europe. You are also making notable progress in Asia, Africa and

Latin America, while Scouting continues to attract many young people in countries which it has traditionally been strong. In congratulating you for the dedication and dynamism with which you serve this cause, I wish to encourage you to continue to uphold the high ideals and challenging programmes of personal development, friendship, brotherhood and service which make your movement so appealing to you.

Scouting is above all an education. The members of the Movement experience it as growth into personal maturity and social responsibility. They learn to assume their place in life with a high degree of commitment to the common good. They learn to care for the less fortunate. They develop a fervent desire to build a culture of goodwill, they learn openness and harmony in human relationships, respect for the environment, acceptance of duties, including the most fundamental of all duties: love of the Creator and obedience to his will.

Scouting is a movement capable of helping millions of young men and women to work for a civilization of "being", in contrast to the civilization of "having" which is produced in so many societies such alarming manifestations of selfishness, frustration and despair and even of violence as a way of life. The true value of your Movement lies in transmitting a humanism expressed in right judgment, strength of character, refinement of spirit and perseverance in the pursuit of truth and goodness. The success of the scouting method certainly has much to do with the way young people are led to discover for themselves and live these qualities through activities suitable to their age. The spontaneous and open style of Scouting activities, within a framework of self discipline and a clear code of behavior, makes these activities particularly attractive to the naturally enthusiastic and dynamic nature of youth.

Concern for Christian values was an essential part of the original programme of Scouting devised by Baden-Powell. It is precisely this openness to the religious dimension of life that gives body and direction to the human and ethical values which the movement seeks to transmit and of which Scout and Guide leaders are called to be exemplary witnesses. It is true that the Church has a special interest in the well-being of Catholic Scouts and Guides, particularly through the activity of the International Catholic Conference. But I would assure you that she holds the entire Scouting Movement in high esteem and is confident that cooperation and exchange between all its component organizations is an important part of the further strengthening and success of the movement as a valuable educational experience.

Dear friends, I renew my sentiments of esteem and my encouragement in your regard. You and the members of your movement may be proud of the great Scouting tradition of personal excellence and self-giving in the service of God and neighbor which you have inherited. I invoke God's blessings upon you as you strive to address the many questions facing your organization today and meet the challenges of maintaining the high ideals of Scouting.

John Paul II

Pope John Paul II spoke to Scouting's international officials in Oct. 1990. Parts of his address are included in the "Annex to the Catholic Scout Charter" approved by the Vatican in July 1992.

"In line with the many instances in which my predecessors have praised the noble : of your movement and its achievements on a worldwide scale since Lord Baden-Powell founded it just over 80 years ago, I assure you of my own personal appreciation of Scouting as a magnificent educational experience and form of social and religious commitment. I am happy to know that, today, over 16 million young people of all religions and cultures on every continent take part in Scouting. . . .

In . . . changing political and social circumstances . . . you are finding opportunities renewed presence of your organization in the countries of central and eastern Europe. You are also making notable progress in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while Scouting continues to attract many young people in countries (where) it has been traditionally strong. I encourage you to continue to uphold the high ideals and challenging program of personal development, friendship, brotherhood and service which make your movement so appealing to youth.

Scouting is above all an education. Members . . . experience it as a growth into personal maturity and social responsibility. They learn to assume their place in life with a high degree of commitment to the common good . They learn to care for the less fortunate. They develop a fervent desire to build a culture of goodwill; they learn openness and harmony in human relationships, respect for the environment, acceptance of duties including the most fundamental of all duties, love of the Creator and obedience to His will.

Scouting is . . . capable of helping millions of young men and women to work for a civilization of "being", in contrast to the civilization of "having", which is producing such alarming manifestations of selfishness, frustration and despair, and . . . violence as a way of life. The true value of your movement lies in transmitting a humanism expressed in right judgment, strength of character, refinement of spirit, and perseverance in the pursuit of truth and goodness.

The success of the Scouting method has much to do with the way young people are to discover for themselves and live these qualities through activities suitable to their age. The spontaneous and open style of Scouting activities, within a framework of self-discipline and a clear code of behavior, makes these activities particularly attractive because of the naturally enthusiastic and generous nature of youth.

Concern for the Christian values was an essential part of the original program . . . developed by Baden-Powell. It is precisely this openness to the religious dimension of life that gives body and direction to the human and ethical values the movement seeks to transmit. It is true that the Church has a special interest in the well-being of Catholic Scout Leaders and Guides . . . but I assure you that she holds the entire Scouting movement in high esteem and is confident that cooperation and exchange between all its component organizations

is an important part of (its) further strengthening and success. . . .

You . . . may well be proud of the great Scouting traditions of personal excellence and giving in the service of God and neighbor which you have inherited. I invoke God's blessings upon you as you strive to address the many questions facing your organization today and meet the challenges of maintaining the high ideals of Scouting."

John Paul II⁽⁹⁾

To the International Conference for Catholic Scouting

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the International Conference for Catholic Scouting, it gives me great pleasure to join in thanksgiving with the men and women who have taken part in the Catholic scout movement since its inception and who have received the demanding spiritual and human training which assists them through their daily lives.

The fusion of scouting methodology and the intuitions of Fr. Sevin SJ resulted in the creation of a pedagogic system based upon evangelical values - a system in which each young person is helped to blossom and develop their own personality by bringing forth the talents of each individual. The scouting law, as it trains young people to follow the path of honour, draws them towards moral rectitude and the spirit of virtue thus guides them towards God as it calls upon them to serve their brothers and sisters. Learning to do good, they become men and women capable of taking on their responsibilities within the Church and within society. In their patrols, on camp and in many other situations scouts discover the Lord through the wonders of His creation which they so deeply respect. There is also a wonderful experience of religious life as they get to know Christ through personal prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. In addition, scouting offers young people the opportunity to learn about life in society through mutual relationships.

The international scouting fraternity creates links between people of different cultures, languages and confessions and sets up the possibility of dialogue between them all. In this spirit, I applaud the work of the teams of leaders and those scout units who take the trouble to bring the ideals and pedagogic system of the scouting movement to the marginalized and disorientated young people from the inner cities and the industrial suburbs. This is fraternal work which contributes to the evangelisation of people who are often at a distance from the Christ and His Church as well as developing peace and co-operation among people in general. I applaud the attitude of those responsible for the young people within the movement who encourage encounters with other religious communities in an ecumenical spirit, educating through dialogue and instilling respect for one another. While never weakening the principles of Catholic scouting, such approaches between young Catholic scouts and young people from other religious persuasions allow Christ to be better known and more loved.

I also acknowledge scouting as an important maturing ground for vocations for young people who may wish to join the priesthood or become involved in religious life or work.

calling may be to married life according to the teachings of the Church. It is within educational framework that young people can find that fraternal support and essential guidance from their leaders and their companions to assist them in responding fully to the call of the Lord.

As the year 2000 approaches, I fervently hope that the scouting movement continue its quest to discover the most radical ways of living out its evangelical activity, bearing witness in communion and harmonious co-operation. In this sense, it is important to accord special acknowledgment to the particularities of certain units within the various federations in a spirit of dialogue and understanding. It would also be of particular significance if the unity of the scouting movement, occasionally fragmented in the past, were to become complete during the Jubilee. Such unity would bear witness to fraternal love and reconciliation in the eyes of the whole world, thus allowing the disciples of the Lord to be known. (cf. 1 Jn 4, 7-9)

Calling on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Our Lady for all those involved in the scouting movement, I fervently encourage the movement to carry on and intensify the service it gives to the young people of the world both by offering testimony and an ideal and proposing Christ as a model of perfectly accomplished human life and path towards goodness, because He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14,6). I commend the members of the International Conference for Catholic Scouting, with all my heart, to bestow the Apostolic Blessing.

Endnotes

1. "Pope Pius XI and the Boy Scouts." *America*, 29 (August 11, 1923): 407.
2. The National Catholic Committee on Scouting. *The Holy Father Speaks to Boy Scouts*. Boy Scouts of America: New York, ca 1935. (NSM)
3. Pope Pius XII. "Catholic Scouts and the Apostolate." *Clergy Review*, 37 (October 1950): 617-619.
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5. Pope John XXIII. "Boy Scouts." *The Pope Speaks*, 5 (Fall 1959): 387.
6. Paul VI, Pope. *His Holiness Pope Paul VI Speaks for Scouting*. National Catholic Committee on Scouting: New Brunswick, 1968. (Photocopy) (NSM)
7. International Catholic Conference of Scouting. *John Paul II and Scouting*. International Catholic Conference of Scouting: Montevideo, Uruguay, 1994.
8. International Catholic Conference of Scouting. *John Paul II and Scouting*. International Catholic Conference of Scouting: Montevideo, Uruguay, 1994.
9. International Catholic Conference of Scouting, The Vatican, 13th September 1998

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This page was last modified on Tuesday, May 10, 2011.