



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO CATHOLIC SCOUTING CONFERENCE**

Sunday, 13 September 1998

To the Leaders of the International Catholic Scouting Conference,

1. On the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the International Catholic Scouting Conference, I willingly join in the thanksgiving of the men and women who have participated in the Catholic Scout movement since its beginning and have received a spiritual and human formation that helps them in their daily lives.

The meeting of the Scout method with the insights of Fr Sévin, S.J., has made it possible to develop an educational programme based on Gospel values, in which each young person is led to grow and to develop his personality, thus making his talents fruitful. The Scout law, training young people in the way of virtue, invites them to moral rectitude and a spirit of asceticism, thus directing them to God and calling them to serve their brethren; by striving to do good, they become men and women who can play a responsible role in the Church and in society. In a troop, at camp and in other situations, Scouts discover the Lord through the wonders of creation, which they are called to respect. They also have a valuable experience of ecclesial life, meeting Christ in personal prayer, to which they can become accustomed, and in the Eucharistic celebration. In addition, Scout unity gives young people the opportunity of an apprenticeship for life in society with mutual respect.

2. The international brotherhood of Scouting creates bonds between people of different cultures, languages or creeds, and is an opportunity for dialogue between them. In this spirit, I greet the Scout leaders and groups who are concerned about offering the ideals and educational programme of their movement to young people from the cities and suburbs, who often have nothing to do. Here there is a truly fraternal dimension, which contributes to the evangelization of people who are often very far from Christ and the Church, and to the fostering of peace and co-operation between individuals and peoples. I salute the attitude of the leaders and young members of the movement, which encourages meetings with members of other Ecclesial Communities in an ecumenical spirit, thus teaching them dialogue and respect for others. Without denying the specific principles of Catholic Scouting, this openness to young people of other cultures and religious

convictions will enable the Church to be better known and better loved.

I have not forgotten that Scouting is a place for vocations to mature in the young people who hope to commit themselves to the priesthood or religious life or to marriage according to the Church's principles. In this educational framework, they receive fraternal support and valuable assistance in their discernment from their leaders and comrades so that they can respond fully to the Lord's call.

3. As the Year 2000 approaches, I keenly hope that the Scout movement will continue to examine its way of living more radically the Gospel commitment and to bear witness to harmonious co-operation and communion. In this regard, it will be important to recognize the particular sensibilities of certain units within the federations themselves, with an openness to dialogue and understanding. It would also be particularly significant for the unity of the Scout movement, sometimes harmed in the past, to become a reality during the Great Jubilee; thus, in the eyes of the world, a witness of fraternal love and reconciliation would be given, by which the Lord's disciples can be recognized (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-9).

4. As I implore upon all Scouts the support of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Our Lady, I warmly encourage the movement to continue and to intensify its service to the world's young people, offering them an ideal and giving them Christ as the model of a perfectly fulfilled human life and as the way to happiness, for he is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). To all the members of the *International Catholic Scouting Conference*, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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