

Boy Scouts in Action with the Holy Spirit

Introduction: Scouting Is Youth Ministry

Youth ministry includes the Catholic parish-chartered Scout unit (Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venture Units, or Explorer Posts). Coordinators of youth ministry are encouraged to spend time with the leaders of the parish-chartered units to discuss places for common support. For example, youth ministry coordinators could provide catechists for the Scout Religious Emblems programs, or Scouts could provide support or encourage youth to attend parish-sponsored youth events.

Family Activity

Have each Scout talk with his parent(s) about his given name. The conversation could include where the name came from and why the parent(s) chose that name for the Scout. The parent(s) could also describe to the Scout the day that he was baptized. Who attended the baptism? Why was it important for the parent(s) to have the Scout baptized? Invite each Scout to choose a patron saint that he most identifies with. (Butler's *Lives of the Saints* is a very helpful resource.) Then have him write his patron saint's name on a piece of paper and bring it to the next troop meeting.

Scoutmasters

At the troop meeting, gather the names of the patron saints. Afterward, visit your local Catholic bookstore and purchase a holy card or small medallion that depicts each Scout's patron or chosen saint. Note that Saint George is the patron saint of Scouts; Saint Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of students.

Patrol Activity

Have the patrol leader gather and record all of the patron saint names from the members. Each Scout should talk with a buddy about the patron saint that he chose and why he chose it. As a patrol, choose a patron saint for the patrol. Add to the patrol flag a symbol, word, or picture that represents the patrol's patron saint. Add the names of the patrol members' patron saints to the patrol staff.

Troop Activity

At a troop meeting in October, invite your pastor to join you for a blessing ceremony. The room should be darkened, with only the candles from the Oath and Law lit. Have several Scouts light each candle in turn, reciting a point or part of the Oath and Law. Explain to the troop that the candles representing the Scout Oath and Law also point toward Scout spirit and the way that the Holy Spirit moves within the unit. Point out that patron saints are examples of the Holy Spirit in the world, and that the Spirit has been active in the lives of many holy men and women throughout the ages. Next, ask the pastor to bless the holy cards or medallions. Then ask one patrol to come forward. Read the names of the patrol members' patron saints in litany form, such as:

- St. George, pray for us.
- St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us.
- St. Michael, pray for us.

Place a medallion around the neck of each Scout or present him with his holy card. Repeat the process with each patrol, going through the whole troop in this manner. Close with the Scouter's Minute and a blessing from your pastor.

The Scouter's Minute (at a Troop Meeting in October)

In our troop, we talk a lot about "Scout Spirit." Scout Spirit is selflessness, it is enthusiasm for Scouting, it is helping out a new Scout with a difficult skill (like knot tying), or it might be giving your spare warm sweater to a fellow Scout who forgot his sweater before coming on a campout. Scout Spirit is wanting to learn everything you can about Scouting and taking what you've learned from Scouting to your family, school, parish, and the community.

The Holy Spirit is very similar to Scout Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is a part of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and because Jesus and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to help us live out our Baptism and Confirmation, when we live in the Holy Spirit we are living Scout Spirit. The Holy Spirit calls us to be selfless, to

teach each other, to give to those in need, to pray, and to learn more about Jesus.

In the Scout Oath, we pledge our Duty to God. "Duty to God" means that we want to know and understand Jesus in our lives and try to live the way Jesus calls us to. But we can only do this in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like Scout Spirit in that the Holy Spirit calls us to look at our achievements, our hopes, and our dreams, and to place them before God in a (Scout) spirit of hopefulness and joy. As disciples of Jesus and as Scouts, we are all called to find our gifts and to share those gifts with cheerfulness, brotherhood, and service. When you, as Scouts, live with the Holy Spirit, you are truly showing your Scout Spirit!

The Scouter's Minute (at an October Campout)

With the troop gathered around the campfire, the Scouter reads aloud the following Gospel passage. "The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The Scouter should pause for a brief period of quiet reflection on the reading.

The light and the warmth of the campfire point us to a relationship with the God who created us and from whom the Spirit comes. The campfire is itself a symbol of cheerfulness and community. When we gather around it we are called to a relationship with each other and with God, whom Jesus has revealed for us. The Holy Spirit is what binds us together in warmth and light. But coming together is not enough. We are also called to go out in service to others, for the good of the community and of the world. When we serve others in a spirit of selflessness, we serve God. What are some concrete things that a Scout can do in service and Scout spirit for the community? Can you think of a few examples?

The Scouter's Conference

During the Board of Review in the last quarter of the year, the Scouter has the opportunity to ask each Scout how his study and skill development have progressed since the last conference. The Scouter should take the time to note the "ordinary" aspects of the Scout's accomplishments and challenges. With that as a backdrop, the Scouter should point out the Scout's need for perseverance and reliance on his Scout Spirit and the Holy Spirit throughout his spiritual journey.

The Scouter should explain that is possible for a Scout, after much reflection and practice, to live out the full ideals of the Scout Oath and Law and come to an understanding of the "Virtuous Man" living in his community, his family, and his school. But the "Man of Virtue" (the one who tries to live fully the Scout Oath and Law) is not a complete person unless he invites and is open to God and the movements of God in his life. If a virtuous Scout recognizes his relationship with the God who has created him and who calls him to live his life in relationship with Jesus and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, then his actions will point to his influences on the environments in which he lives. An authentic witness to the Scouter's own faith struggles and understandings can be appropriate for Leadership Corps-aged scouts (ages 15-18).

The Chartered Partner: The Parish

Invite your pastor to join you at your October or November campout to lead the Scouts in Mass and to join you for any other part of the weekend. Point out that as the "Institutional Head" and the spiritual leader for your unit, the pastor is the spiritual director of the troop. Thank him for his assistance and service. Recognize him with a special gift or gesture during the campout.

By Mike Eppler, Director of Youth and Young Adult Formation, Diocese of Evansville

A CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION OF THE SCOUT OATH AND LAW



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The Scout Oath and Law teaches a boy respect for authority, develops an attitude of service, and encourages the Christian way of life.

It is strongly recommended that:

- At a boy's Tenderfoot investiture ceremony he is given a copy of this interpretation of the Scout Oath and Law.
- At some time during his first 6 months in Scouting, he discusses with his parents the meaning and obligations of the Scout Oath and Law.
- Provisions are made during Scout Sunday observance for all members of the unit to rededicate themselves to the precepts of the Scout Oath and Law.
- At least once a year, each unit leader or Scout chaplain discusses with his unit the meaning and obligations of the Scout Oath and Law.
- During Scout Retreats and Days of Recollection, each member of the unit is provided an opportunity to "check his course," to determine just how well he is living up to these precepts.

THE SCOUT OATH

"On my honor I will do my best": Our honor is a quality we possess because of our dignity as human beings and children of God. Our "best" means to give all we have. It means to keep striving to do what we know is right, and in the Oath it means we will try to be good Scouts by fulfilling our Scout duties as expressed in the Scout Law.

"To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law": Our duty to God and country means chiefly two things: obedience and loyalty. The duties we owe to the church, to our country, to parents, to one another, and to ourselves come from some command of God. The Scout Law sums up all the qualities a Scout should have and without which he cannot be a good Scout.

"To help other people at all times": Our Lord told us that love of our neighbor was like the first law of love of God. Early Christians were known by the love they had for one another. Real Christian charity or love prompts us to want to help others at all times. Our Scouting training will give us skills and knowledge that will put us in a better position to do this.

"To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight": Scouting offers us many opportunities to grow strong physically. To be alert and ready requires us to give special care to those two gifts of soul—intellect and will—that make us like unto God. "Morally straight" means we must try to know what is right and true, to love what is good, and to choose it.

THE SCOUT LAW

The Scout Law is really a definition of a Scout. Wearing the uniform alone does not make a Scout. In fact, the boy who keeps the Scout Law, even if he has no uniform, is the real Scout far more than one who wears the uniform but does not keep the Law. This is the Scout Law you promise to obey in the Scout Oath:

A Scout is trustworthy: Character is what a man is. Reputation is what people think about him. A youth of character is worthy of trust. No one is worthy of trust who does not recognize his dignity and the dignity of all men as children of God.

A Scout is loyal: Because our first loyalty is to God, a Scout is loyal to all to whom loyalty is due—his parents, his church, and his country.

A Scout is helpful: Christ has told us that the good turns we do for others will be considered as done to him. The reason we are helpful is that we see Christ in everybody. If our Lord was willing to die for everybody, a Scout certainly should be ready to render help. The whole Scout program gives us an opportunity to be helpful.

A Scout is friendly: The basis and motive of this point of the Law is Christian charity. We are all children of the same father, and brothers of Jesus Christ. Recognizing this, a Scout should be a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout.

A Scout is courteous: A Scout should respect the image of God in everyone. The meaning of love as a Scout should be taken from the words of Christ himself: "I have come not to be served, but to serve."

A Scout is kind: This point of the Law refers mostly to animals. They exist for our use. They have life and feeling, and God has given them to us as a trust. As such, we must use them well, never abusing or mistreating them.

A Scout is obedient: Jesus Christ gave us an example of perfect obedience throughout his life. This will be a difficult point of the Law for a Scout to keep because it will mean discipline and giving up his own will at times. He should obey, not because the command pleases him, but because the one giving it has the right to do so, is someone in authority, and is right in doing so. Disobedience brought death and sin into the world. Obedience brought our salvation. Real victory comes from obedience—first to God and then to all he has placed in authority as long as they deserve our obedience.

A Scout is cheerful: Joy should be one of the marks of a child of God. A Scout will have joy in his heart and manifest it outwardly by his cheerful manner.

A Scout is thrifty: Thrift teaches self-respect, making us unwilling to be a burden to others. Far from being a burden, we are able by thrift to help them. A Scout is deeply concerned with preserving our natural resources.

A Scout is brave: He can face danger even if he is afraid. He has courage to stand for what he thinks is right even if others scorn him.

A Scout is clean: He keeps clean in body and thought; stands for clean speech, clean sport, clean habits; and travels with a clean crowd.

A Scout is reverent: He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.

RELIGIOUS EMBLEMS FOR CATHOLICS

For Cub Scouts: Parvuli Dei

A home-centered program to help the Cub Scout learn about his faith through visits to places of interest.

For Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts: Ad Altare Dei

A scripture study and project-centered program based on the sacraments to relate the boy's Scouting life to his religious life.

For Boy Scouts, Eastern Catholic Churches: Light Is Life
Program based on the "God With Us" series of the Eastern Christian Formation Program to prepare a Scout to be an active member of his faith community.

For Explorers: PIUS XII

A program to help the teenager learn more about his/her

personal vocation as a Christian now and his/her career vocation later.

SPECIAL UNIT RECOGNITION

POPE PAUL VI

This is an annual presentation to units under Catholic auspices who carry out a successful program of spiritual activities.

Requirements include:

- Scouter development training
- attendance at retreat
- religious emblems earned
- good turns to the parish
- increased membership
- rededication and explanation to the principles of the Oath and Law

For more information, write to Catholic Relationships, Boy Scouts of America, P.O. Box 152079, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, Irving, TX 75015-2079.