



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE MEMBERS
OF THE WORLD COMMITTEE OF SCOUTING**

Thursday, 20 September 1990

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) the many instances in which my predecessors have praised the noble aims of your movement and its achievements on a world-wide scale since Lord Baden-Powell founded it just over eighty 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 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 in 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 youth.

Scouting is above all an education. The members of the movement 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 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 producing 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 behaviour, makes these activities particularly attractive to the naturally enthusiastic and generous 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 valid educational experience.

Dear friends, I renew my sentiments of esteem and my encouragement in your regard. You and the members of your movement may well be proud of the great Scouting traditions of personal excellence and selfgiving in the service of God and neighbour 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.

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