



## Vocational Promotion Through Scouting Youth Ministry

*"Consider Your Call"*  
(1 Cor. 1:26)



The Lord Jesus, in founding the Church, established "that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-12)

"Everyone in the Church has received a vocation. The exercise of it must not be isolated in the personal sphere of the self but must be the occasion of the development of the other vocations too. The various vocations, in fact, are complementary to one another, and all converge in a unique mission." (John Paul II, May 10, 1987)

All are called "according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Eph. 4:7)

The Boy Scouts of America, in association with the Catholic Church, offers young people a proven and effective program that challenges and prepares them for a life of service—the leadership of giving. This program is well known for its ideals and values: responsibility to God, to family, to neighbor, and to both the church and civic aspects of community.

Through a plan of cooperation developed between the bishops of the Church and the officials of the BSA, the National Catholic Committee on Scouting is recognized as having the authority to give general supervision to the entire Scouting program under Catholic auspices. The National Catholic Conference of Bishops gives guidance to this committee through a bishop adviser and the participation of the representative for youth ministry, NCCB/USCC. It recognizes that Scouting is concerned not only with training a young person to live up to its ideals, which include becoming active members in the church, but also with inspiring and training sound adult leaders of the highest moral caliber.

One of the major challenges facing the Church today is the support and development of church-related vocations, including those to consecrated married life, dedicated single life, ordained ministries (priesthood and diaconate), vowed religious life (sisters, brothers, priests) and lay pastoral ministry.

Some of the Scouting activities which are effective in meeting this challenge are:

### **Annual Scout Retreat**

A period of "prime time" for God, consisting of prayer, spiritual input, quiet reflection and activities designed to awaken, confirm and strengthen the God/human relationship.

### **Vocational Camporee**

A vocational camporee is a gathering designed to examine all church-related vocations including sacramental union

(marriage) and dedicated single life: vowed (religious) and voluntary forms of service; ordained (priesthood/diaconate) and commonly accepted church roles (teacher, catechist, administrator, lay missionary, youth minister, etc.). At such a gathering, detailed study is made of all locally available roles in ministry as well as other options currently operative or developing in the Church.

### **Religious Emblems Program (Denominational or Ecumenical)**

A religious emblems program is the systematic study and application of the Parvuli Dei (for Cub Scouts), the Ad Altare Dei and Light is Life (for Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts) and the Pope Pius XII (for older Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Explorers), as well as the unit religious citation, the Pope Paul VI. The Parvuli Dei, Ad Altare Dei, Light is Life, and Pope Pius XII programs reinforce family-centered and parish-supported religious education. Many times in the past, these very programs have helped a young person choose a vocation. They promote spiritual growth and invite a deeper appreciation of the mysteries of faith. They challenge the youth to actually practice "duty to God," to be "reverent," and to be "faithful" in religious duties and responsibilities.

### **Counselor/Moderator Training for the Religious Emblems Program**

This training can take place either on the local level or in conjunction with a Scouter Development or leadership training program. Trained counselors/moderators have a tremendous impact as "role models" for dedication, responsibility, and fidelity to ministry, which may later develop into a life of service within the context of one's own church-related vocation.

### **Vocation-Oriented Field Trips**

Visits to religious houses, seminaries, monasteries, lay pastoral training centers and retreat houses are valuable in that they offer young people a hands-on experience of the wide range of church-related lifestyles available to men and women, single or married, in our Church today. Such excursions or weekends are opportunities for one-on-one conversations, interest orientation, discussions on lifelong commitment, and faith-sharing experiences. They can add to the impact that activities of this nature have on young people.

## Special Interest Explorer Posts

Explorer posts that specialize in covering the fields of lay and clerical church leadership, service, and theology do much to foster vocational interest.

## Involvement in Community and Parish Service Projects

Working side by side in the company of men and women who have in some way dedicated all or part of their lives to ministries of service can enhance a desire to become involved in community or parish projects.

## Scouter Development

Scouter Development is a spiritual formation program for adults in Church youth ministry.

## Field Masses at Camp and Camporees

Active participation of ordained clergy and dedicated, faith-filled laity are essential to the development of church-related vocations among youth.

## Full-Time Catholic Chaplain (Priest, Deacon, Seminarian or Qualified Lay Person) at Scout Summer Camp

Chaplain duties require providing a priest to celebrate the Eucharist and to offer an opportunity for sacramental reconciliation. They also include counseling, spiritual motivation, promotion of daily prayer, prayer at meals, development of an always-available "sacred space" for silence and reflection (in the presence of the blessed sacrament, if possible), companionship, and development of a Christian atmosphere in and about camp.

## Chaplain Aides (To Assist the Camp or Unit Chaplain)

By fulfilling the junior leadership position of chaplain aide, the Scout can become aware of the variety of church-related vocations.

## Scout and Scouter

The Cub Scout Promise, Scout Oath and Explorer Code promote a holistic approach to life which incorporates God into our daily lives.

Vocation directors remind us that through baptism each of us is called to reflect Jesus Christ in our world—to be his hands and voice, to share his spirit and word. How this is done by a given individual is tempered by that person's talents and hampered by whatever limitations are present. Every Catholic member of the Scouting movement should be asked and challenged to answer the question, "Are you listening to Jesus calling you?" Scouting under Catholic auspices teaches that we should all be visible Christs. Coming to recognize Jesus' call and responding to it can require a lifetime of grace or one simple, graced moment—it can be a quiet, gentle wind or a bolt of inspired lightning. But whatever, assured that Jesus is indeed calling each and every one of us, we seek to say, "Yes, Lord, I come to do your will" by helping one another do the same.

Vocational promotion recognizes that successful Scouting must be led by sincere, responsible, and dedicated religious and lay people of high moral character who understand the basic philosophy of its religious, vocational, and educational aspects. Therefore, a leader in Scouting who has learned basic Scouting lore has only half accomplished the mission. To do a full and effective job, the Scouter must learn how to relate and share personal Christian faith in daily life practices.

## Final Analysis

Divine providence operates through human instruments. Some future priest, a potential deacon, or perhaps tomorrow's lay administrator of your parish, or lay missionary may be waiting for a word from you—a suggestion or a hint of encouragement. In the final analysis, Catholic youth are attracted to ordained/lay church-related vocations if we, the Catholic adults in their lives, share with them our faith in Jesus Christ and our love for our Church. Scouting can and does keep these young people close to us during their formative years and instills ordained/lay church-related vocations.

As adult leaders we must encourage, listen, guide and above all pray that the spirit will continue to guide many to the service of the Church.

*"Pray the Lord of the harvest . . ."*  
(Matt. 9:38)

Above all, we can pray. The Lord himself recommends it: "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2)

Praying for vocations to the ordained ministry, religious life, and lay pastoral ministry is the duty of all, and it is always a duty. The future of vocations is in the hands of God, but in a certain sense it is also in our hands. Prayer is our strength—with it vocations cannot become less, nor will the divine voice lack being heard. Pray to our creator so that no one will feel extraneous or indifferent to this voice, but on the contrary, people will challenge themselves and measure their own capacity, or, better still, discover their own reserves of generosity and responsibility. (John Paul II, May 10, 1987)

## Prayer for Vocations

Lord Jesus, just as one day you called the first disciples and sent them to the ends of the Earth, so too, today continue to make resound your invitation: 'Come, follow Me!' Give to young men and women grace to respond readily to your voice.

Grant perseverance to our seminarians and to all those who are realizing an ideal of life dedicated to your service. Sustain our lay ministers, ordained clergy, and those called to religious life, in their apostolic labors.

Awaken in our communities the missionary endeavor. Lord, send laborers into your harvest and do not allow humanity to lose its way for a lack of pastors, missionaries, and people dedicated to the cause of the gospel.

Mary, Mother of the Church, model of every vocation, help us to respond by saying 'yes' to the Lord who calls us to collaborate in the divine plan of salvation. Amen.