



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC SCOUT MOVEMENT FOR ADULTS (MASCI)

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 8 November 2014*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you with joy on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Italian Catholic Scout Movement for Adults. I address a cordial greeting to each one, beginning with the National President, whom I thank for her words, and the Assistant, whom I also thank; and I also thank you for your gesture. I thank you for the work you are doing in the Church and in society, witnessing to the Gospel, in accordance with Scout code. It is important to underline the ecclesial dimension of your association, which welcomes lay people who are well aware of the duties inherent in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Moved by this conviction, in these years of apostolic commitment you have sought to witness to the values of loyalty, of fraternity and of love of God and neighbour, generously serving the ecclesial and civil communities.

The terminology typical of scouting often uses the term “way”, as a meaningful value in the life of boys and girls, teenagers and adults. Therefore, I would like to encourage you to continue your journey which calls you to lead the way in the family; lead the way in creation; lead the way in the city. Walk and lead the way: walking, not wandering, and not quietly! Always walking, but leading the way.

Lead the way in the family. The family is always the cell of society, and is the primary place of education. It is the community of love and of life in which each person learns to relate to others and to the world; and thanks to the solid foundation acquired within the family a person is able to project him/herself in society, to confidently enter other educational environments, such as the school, the parish, associations.... Thus, within this integration of the foundations assimilated in the family and “outside” experiences, we learn to find our way in the world.

All vocations take their first steps within the family and bear the imprint throughout life. For a movement such as yours, based on lifelong education and on educational choice, it is important to reaffirm that education in the family is a priority choice. For you Christian parents, the educational mission finds its specific source in the Sacrament of Matrimony, for which the task of raising children is a ministry of the utmost importance in the Church. Not only do parents have a certain educational obligation toward their children, but also children toward their siblings and toward their own parents, meaning that duty of reciprocal help in faith and in goodness. At times it happens that a child is able, with his affection, with his simplicity, to reanimate the entire family. Dialogue between spouses, mutual discussion and listening are essential elements for a serene and fruitful family.

Lead the way in creation. Our time cannot ignore the issue of ecology, which is vital to man's survival, nor reduce it to merely a political question: indeed, it has a moral dimension that affects everyone, such that no one can ignore it. As disciples of Christ, we have a further reason to join with all men and women of good will to protect and defend nature and the environment. Creation is, in fact, a gift entrusted to us from the hands of the Creator. All of nature that surrounds us is created like us, created together with us, and in a common destiny it tends to find its fulfillment and ultimate end in God himself — the Bible says “new heavens and a new earth” (cf. Is 65:17, 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). This doctrine of our faith is an even stronger stimulus for us to have a responsible and respectful relationship with Creation: in inanimate nature, in plants and in animals, we recognize the imprint of the Creator, and in our fellow kind, His very image.

Living in closer contact with nature, as you do, entails not only respect for it but also the commitment to contribute concretely to eliminate the wastefulness of a society that increasingly tends to throw away goods which are still useful and which can be donated to the many who are in need.

Lead the way in cities. Living in neighbourhoods and cities, you are called to be as leaven which makes the dough rise, offering your sincere contribution to achieve the common good. It is important to know how to offer the Gospel values with joy, in a fair and open discussion with various cultural and social bodies. In a complex and multicultural society, you are able to testify, with simplicity and humility, to Jesus' love for each person, to try also new ways of spreading the Gospel, faithful to Christ and faithful to man, who in the cities often experiences wearing situations, and sometimes risks losing his way, losing the ability to see the horizon, failing to feel God's presence. Therefore, the true compass to offer these brothers and sisters is closeness of heart, a “guided” heart, that is, with an awareness of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, may you continue to follow your path with hope in the future. Your scouting formation is a good training! Let us recall St Paul (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-27): he speaks of athletes who train with strict discipline to race for an ephemeral prize; the Christian, instead, trains to be a good missionary disciple of the Lord Jesus, listening assiduously to his Word, always

trusting in Him, who never disappoints, pausing with Him in prayer, seeking to be a living stone in the ecclesial community.

Thank you, dear friends, for this meeting. I pray for you. Please, pray for me.