



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARD. JEAN-PIERRE RICARD
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING
OF THE FIRST SCOUT CAMP***

*To His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard,
Archbishop of Bordeaux
President of the Bishops' Conference of France*

The first of August 2007 will mark the 100th anniversary of the opening on Brownsea Island, England, of the first Scout camp organized by Lord Baden-Powell.

On this occasion, all those in the world, young people and adults who once made their Scout promise individually or as a group, will be invited to renew it and to make a gesture for peace, thereby stressing how close the vocation of a "peacemaker" is to the Scout ideal.

For a century, through games, action, adventure, contact with nature, a team spirit and service to others, an integral formation of the human person is offered to everyone who becomes a Scout.

Made fruitful by the Gospel, scouting is not only a place for true human growth but also for a forceful presentation of Christianity and real spiritual and moral development, as well as being an authentic path of holiness.

It would be appropriate to recall the words of Fr Jacques Sevin, S.J., the founder of Catholic Scouts: "Holiness does not belong to any specific period and has no specific uniform". The sense of responsibility inspired by the scouting pedagogy leads to a life in charity and the desire to serve one's neighbour in the image of Christ the servant, relying on the grace that he bestows especially in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

With all those in your Country who have benefited from belonging to a Scouts' association - the

Scouts and Guides of France, the Scouts and Guides of Europe or the United Scouts and Guides of France - I rejoice that since the appeal for greater communion among Catholic Scouts launched by my Predecessor in 1997, there have been outstanding instances of collaboration, which have respected the sensibilities of each movement with a view to greater unity in the heart of the Church.

Indeed, Scout leaders will remember that their priority task is to awaken and form the personalities of the young people entrusted to them by their families, teaching them to encounter Christ and making them familiar with Church life.

It is also important that "Scout fellowship" is manifested and develops among Scouts and between the different movements, which was part of their initial ideal.

Furthermore, especially for the young generations, this "membership" demonstrates what the Body of Christ is, or, to use St Paul's image, all are called to carry out a mission in their own province, to rejoice in the progress of others and to help their brothers and sisters in their trials (cf. I Cor 12: 12-26).

I thank the Lord for all the fruits which scouting has yielded in the past century. With the entire Church, I trust that the different movements, Scouts of France, Scouts and Guides of Europe, United Scouts and Guides of France, may pursue the route with ever greater interaction, and offer to today's boys and girls a pedagogy that forms in them a strong personality based on Christ, with the aspiration to live the high ideals of the faith and human solidarity.

From this viewpoint, the Scout promise and prayer form a basis and an ideal to develop throughout life. Lord Baden-Powell used to say this: "Always be faithful to your Scout Promise, even when you are no longer a child - and may God help you to succeed!". When a person does his utmost to keep his promises, the Lord himself strengthens him on his way.

I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing to the Scouts and Guides who make up the three movements, to the young people and adults and to the chaplains who supervise them, to the families, to former Scouts and Guides and to you yourself as well as all the Pastors of the Church in France.

From the Vatican, 22 June 2007

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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