

SCOUTS IN THE CHURCH

In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution emanated by the Second Vatican Council, following a lengthy section dedicated to the mystery of the Church as the ***mystical body of Christ and the People of God in both its visible and spiritual dimensions***, an explanation is given of the hierarchical constitution of the Church with particular reference to the Episcopacy.

These aspects have already been sufficiently explained by Father Migut in his conference.

On this occasion we will try to enter more deeply into the relationship that exists between the Scout Movement, or rather the activity of the scouts, as members of the Church and the Church as a hierarchical and institutional structure.

Without entering into too much detail regarding the ecclesiality of Catholic Scouting, insofar as it is a movement in which members of the Church take part and which the Church, by means of its hierarchy - and in particular, in our case the *U.I.G.S.E.-F.S.E* - recognizes as an instrument of apostolate, we will set out by examining a few of our movement's principal documents.

The Decree of Natural and Christian Principles of European Scouting states:

2. *Scouting intends to educate a **Man of Faith, a son of the Church**.*

This formula was also adopted in the Federal Statutes which affirms the same at point 1.2.6. (*The U.I.G.S.E.-F.S.E. intends to educate a man of faith, a son of the Church.*)

In today's world, a certain division becomes ever more apparent between the concept of personal faith, or rather "personalized faith" and the recognition and desire to be part of an institution, or community willed by and founded by Christ, that is the visible Church, guided according to His divine will and regulated by norms, principles and laws.

While the first factor - that is of personal faith - is more easily accepted, in as much as it corresponds to the universally recognized concept of man's personal freedom, the second factor is often presented in a rather negative light, insofar as a conscientious participation in the Church is regarded as a restricting element of one's "personal faith".

Our concept of scouting, on the other hand, firmly upholds the inseparable union of these two elements, necessary for the scouts of our Union.

This topic is expounded upon with greater detail in the Religious Directory, which reads at numbers 4 and 5:

4. ***A Christian belongs to Christ's visible Church; he/she takes part in its liturgical and sacramental life and receives its action lines from the Church.***

If on the one hand, at the federal level, the Federation of European Scouting may not be totally linked to one Church only, any F.S.E. member must, on the other hand, belong to one Church or get ready to belong to it. The F.S.E. only accepts young people and associations belonging to one of the following Churches: the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church or one of the Protestant Churches born from the Reformation, confessing Christ's divinity and recognizing the Apostles' Creed at the faith definition. Any FSE scout or guide unit must have a clear position towards one of these Churches.

Nobody can pronounce the scout (or guide) promise without being baptized. However it is possible to admit to the promise a scout (or guide) involved in the catechumenal preparation.

Our Federation numbers itself among the ecclesiastical movements which specifically make use of the scouting method. For this reason, members of the F.S.E. are primarily required to be members of the Church, or at least Catechumens - that is, already engaged in a preparatory walk of faith in view of full reception into the Church. Likewise, it would be certainly inadequate that any role on a leadership level should be carried out by individuals who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation; in other words, by those who have not completed the *iter* of the sacraments of Christian initiation. Otherwise, what sense would there be in making the promise to serve God and the Church, the same promise recited in the Scout Promise? On this point, it is important to maintain a clear, firm position especially before parents who request membership for their unbaptized children and towards those members of our Associations who tend to hold off from receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, with the presumption of continuing their walk of formation and service, while even being entrusted educational roles and responsibilities.

5. *Each Church has a very precise conception of education. We cannot conceive that religion should be taught separately; it has to irradiate with its light all the knowledge communicated and all the activities which are developed. In a conception of scouting faithful to Baden-Powell's thought, a separation between religious life and technical life should not be admitted in the unit. **So the young people's full religious development requires that their chiefs belong to the same Church as them, profess the same doctrine, and take part in the same liturgical and sacramental life.** This is why the F.S.E. considers as a normal situation when the national communities of European Guides and Scouts constitute homogeneous confessional associations, which are spiritually animated and guided by their Churches, as well at the local level as at the national level.*

An authentic belonging to the Church, a full adhesion to its doctrine, and an active participation in its liturgical and sacramental life – these are the three basic and fundamental conditions requested from a Chief leader of the F.S.E..

In the introductory article of our Federal Statutes we read that our Association *is a private international organization of faithful under Pontifical law. Apart from the norms of these statutes, **the Union is ruled by the canon law in effect.***

This last statement permits us to reflect on the manner in which the Church magisterium and Canon Law view the existence, activity and totality of rights and duties belonging to the faithful according to their particular state of life with a special regard for lay associations, as well as those of the Church insofar as a hierarchical structure.

The Laity and Hierarchy

(LG 37). *The laity have the right, as do all Christians, **to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church**, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments. They should **openly reveal to them their needs and desires** with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ.*

*They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even **obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church.** When occasions arise, **let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose.** Let it always be done in truth, in courage and in prudence, with reverence and charity toward those who by reason of their sacred office represent the person of Christ.*

*The laity should, as all Christians, **promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church.** Let them follow the example of Christ, who by His obedience even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God.*

Nor should they omit to pray for those placed over them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of their souls, so that they may do this with joy and not with grief. (211)

***Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative.** Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city.*

This text, together with the decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, can be considered similar to a *Magna Charta* for what concerns a mutual exchange between the laity and the Church hierarchy. Such a relationship is necessary for the combined effort of building the kingdom of God with the committed apostolic contribution of the laity.

Can. 209 §1. *The Christian faithful, even in their own manner of acting, are always obliged to maintain communion with the Church.*

Communion with the Church, which is both a right and a duty, is founded upon and calls for an intimate union with God. According to tradition, communion with the Church is defined as a threefold dimension of

communion in faith, in the sacraments, and in ecclesiastic governance. By our effort to form good Christians and citizens, we do not intend “good Christian” in a vague sense of the word, or in a general manner as the person who believes in the divinity of Christ. Rather, a Christian is intended for that member of the Catholic Church who is inserted in its life of faith and sacraments as well as identified with their incorporation into a determined parochial or diocesan community. Such a communion of faith is expressed on many occasions. A regular participation in parochial life and in its formative activities, an active presence in the diocesan and ecclesial structure, collaboration with other groups and ecclesiastic organizations, etc. ... these are some of the visible signs of one’s “communion with the Church”.

§2. *With great diligence they are to fulfill the duties which they owe to the universal Church and the particular church to which they belong according to the precepts of the law.*

Ecclesiastic law can and must actualize some of the duties which all of the Church’s faithful are called to fulfill. However, the scout must not consider these duties as a limiting constraint, but rather as a “straightaway” for arriving at the final goal of the Christian life, both as an individual and as a member of an association. In the spirit of scouting, and therefore in the spirit of giving one’s best, it certainly would not be sufficient to settle for a mere satisfaction of one’s duty, or the mere minimum necessary. On the contrary, a scout seeks to draw the maximum spiritual profit even from the fulfilment of one’s duty. For example:

- The “obligation or duty” of confession or annual communion. A scout would most certainly respect this obligation, but would not be satisfied by simply fulfilling it. Rather, invited to a regular reception of the sacraments and a deep Eucharistic appreciation, the scout is more likely to receive the Eucharist frequently and make a good confession on a regular basis. In so doing, the scout is not fulfilling an obligation, but nourishing the desire to strengthen his or her own spiritual life.

- The duty of participating to Sunday Mass or on other Holy Days of Obligation. This precept is honoured and moreover excelled by the custom to attend daily Mass when the Scout activity provides the possibility.

- The obligation of supporting the Church financially. A scout does not settle for simply signing for a federal destination of funds to benefit the Church or for leaving pocket change in the Sunday collection. A scout is ready to give of himself or herself, placing both time and talents at the disposition of the Church, to support its works of charity or supply to its other needs, starting with one’s own parish community.

Can. 210 - *All the Christian faithful must direct their efforts to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification, according to their own condition.*

The vocation to sanctity is not a privilege reserved to specific persons or categories of the Church’s faithful. Recalling one of the slogans of World Youth Day in 2000: “Become saints of the Third Millennium”, we must be ever more reminded that “all the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (LG 40:2).

Can. 211 - *All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.*

The divine message of salvation is proclaimed directly through the work of missionaries, but also, or rather, it is especially proclaimed by the testimony of one’s personal life. Sometimes such a testimony takes the form of a true “martyrdom” in the physical or violent sense of the word, but it is much more frequently endured in a psychological or social manner. For the youth, and therefore for scouts who are *par excellence* young in both age and spirit, this canon can be interpreted with John Paul II’s appeal during the World Youth Day Vigil in 2000. *“Perhaps you will not have to shed your blood, but you will certainly be asked to be faithful to Christ! A faithfulness to be lived in the circumstances of everyday life: I am thinking of how difficult it is in today’s world for engaged couples to be faithful to purity before marriage. I think of how the mutual fidelity of young married couples is put to the test. I think of friendships and how easily the temptation to be disloyal creeps in. I think also of how those who have chosen the path of special consecration have to struggle to persevere in their dedication to God and to their*

brothers and sisters. I think of those who want to live a life of solidarity and love in a world where the only things that seem to matter are the logic of profit and one's personal or group interest. I think too of those who work for peace and who see new outbreaks of war erupt and grow worse in different parts of the world; I think of those who work for human freedom and see people still slaves of themselves and of one another. I think of those who work to ensure love and respect for human life and who see life so often attacked and the respect due to life so often flouted."

Can. 212 - §1. *Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church.*

The topic of obedience is incorrectly perceived in today's society, especially in reference not only to an external obedience, but when such an act of submission touches one's interior and spiritual level. *The scout obeys readily.* This article of the Scout Law is not intended just as an effective means to guarantee the proper functioning of an organization or as a practical rule of thumb for a harmonious unit., It should rather be lived on both spiritual and theological levels.

Deriving from the Latin *ob-audire*, ob-ediencia means 'tension towards, a movement made to actively and conscientiously welcome a word or desire of another'.

"Listen, child" (Proverbs 1:8). First of all, obedience is an attitude of a son or daughter. It is that particular kind of listening that only a son or daughter can do in listening to his or her parent, because it is enlightened by the certainty that the parent has only good things to say and give to him or her. This is a listening, full of trust, that makes a son or daughter accept the parent's will, sure that it will be for his or her own good.

An authentic form of obedience can never be presumed or imposed by whoever conveys an order. On the contrary, it is a concession on behalf of the person who freely lets oneself be determined by it. Moreover, what is granted is done so on the basis of one's own authoritativeness.

The decision to obey, or suspend one's own judgement for the time necessary in order to comply with that act contrary to his or her own immediate desire, is the result of having recognized the other's capability to *understand to a greater and better degree* than one's own. Such obedience, therefore, will make one grow and reach *a more elevated level of comprehension and recognition.*

In the case of obedience towards those sacred *Shepherds of the Church, who, as representatives of Christ, are free to speak as teachers in the Faith or decide as leaders of the Church,* we are asked to recognize that same "capability to *understand to a greater and better degree* than our own" as not to persons of competence and good intention, but as to the Holy Spirit, the safeguard of Christ's Church.

In an authentic *rapport* of this kind, it is precisely he or she who *asks obedience* (rather than *imposing* it, which would be purely an exercise of power), who places oneself at risk, knowing fully well that the obedience requested should afterwards demonstrate that superior level of comprehension which only he or she could grasp in precedence. If one fails in this, he or she will no longer obtain obedience - but possibly only an eventual submission - on account of having lost all credibility and authoritativeness. In turn, this will perhaps require a resorting to the exercise of one's authority or power.

God manifests His will through the interior motion of the Spirit, who "guides to all truth" (cfr. John 16:13) through multiple channels of external mediation. Salvation history is in fact a story of mediation which reveals, to a certain degree, the mystery of grace that God works in the depth of hearts. Even Jesus' life bears witness to the work of many mediators, by means of whom He perceived, interpreted, and accepted the will of His Father as His *raison d'être* and the daily bread of His life and mission.

Mediations that exteriorly communicate the will of God must be recognized in the events of life and in the specific requirements of one's own vocation, but they are also expressed in the laws that give order to the life of groups and in the dispositions of those who are called to lead them. In the ecclesial context, laws and dispositions, legitimately given, provide an insight into the will of God, becoming the concrete and "ordered" realization of the demands of the Gospel from which they are formulated and perceived.

In the homily at the beginning of his Petrine ministry, Benedict XVI made this significant statement, "*My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord. To be guided by Him, so that He Himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history*". On the other hand, it is necessary to recognize that the task of guiding others is not easy, especially when the sense of personal autonomy is excessive or conflictive and competitive in its relations with others. Therefore, it is necessary that before this task, everyone sharpens his or her vision of faith, inspired

by Jesus' servile demeanour who washed the feet of His apostles so that they might have taken part in His life and in His love (cf. John 13:1-17).

§2. *The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.*

§3. *According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.*

Ties with "sacred pastors", that is, with bishops and clergy, is not however, a "one way street", nor should such relationships be characterized by sheer submission or pure passivity. With the freedom of the Children of God, all faithful, including scouts, have the right and duty to be active and innovative in their collaboration for the good of the Church. The criteria that should regulate our action in this field are described by the canon - which besides possessing a normative status in the canonical sense - are, in first place, those which we can call the "criteria of good sense".

Besides those criteria that safeguard the integrity of faith and morals, which are already a given and do not require further explanation, in this context it is opportune to remember the correct approach to adopt when the scouts, through their qualified organs, make proposals to the members of the ecclesiastic hierarchy. Even the worthiest proposals will not find an easy welcoming if it is presented with a sense of pride or air of superiority which is offensive or disrespectful in their regards.

The common good is another prerequisite which should be remembered when evaluating whether or not certain proposals are worth pursuing.

Can. 213 - *The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments.*

It is sometimes the case that when dealing with scouting activity: the clergy makes its voice heard by lamenting that the scouts require too much - space, financial support, use of the parish grounds and other parish propriety. This could all be true - and in such case, it is necessary that the requests are re-evaluated with realism and measured according to the concrete situations presented by each group.

On the other hand, the request for spiritual goods – namely the distribution of the sacraments or the Word of God, etc. – should not be made with fear and trepidation. Instead, it is necessary that priests come to the recognition of their duty to distribute these goods to all faithful, as well as to representatives of other parish communities. A parish pastor cannot be excused on the pretext of reserving His priestly ministry towards the parish community in designated times or on 'ordinary' occasions. The Church requires that its pastors, and particularly its pastors, offer their support to the associative life of their parishioners.

In fact, in the Code of Canon Law at Canon 529 §2, the pastor is instructed to welcome and promote the role that faithful and laity are granted in the Church's mission. They are asked to favor the associations with religious objectives. They are heeded to collaborate with the local Bishop and clergy of the diocese, with the aim of encouraging the faithful to care for and contribute to parish unity. In this way, all members acknowledge their place in the diocese and in the universal Church as well as their role in supporting the works that are destined towards the promotion of unity.

A particular mention should be made regarding the figure of the Spiritual Assistant (or Religious Advisor). It would be ideal that such an Assistant should be nominated by the Ecclesiastic authority. The validity of such a nomination is not determined by the scout group's acceptance or lack of acceptance. Clearly, however, every group is expected to sincerely welcome whoever is designated to such a role, in order to favor their ministry and harvest an abundance of spiritual fruit. In groups organized within a parish setting, it is recommended that the Spiritual Assistant (Religious Advisor), if not part of the same parish, should seek to act in collaboration with the parish pastor.

Number five of the Religious Directory states, "*At all levels, chiefs must favour the ministry of religious advisers towards the young people they are responsible for. It is important for religious advisers to deepen their knowledge of the scout method so that they may take the scout and guide specificities into account in their*

pastoral work, without substituting the lay chiefs in their task. Youth, more particularly young chiefs, must not simply be considered as the object of the pastoral solicitude of the Churches: they must be encouraged to become what they really are, that is to say active subjects partaking in the evangelisation and social renewal of the world that surrounds them."

A formative course is also foreseen for the Assistants occupied with Scouting. This preparation calls for a collaboration with National Assistants and those of the single branches with their respective chiefs, and particularly with those who are responsible for the formation carried out in the camps dedicated to this purpose.

Can. 214 - *The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescripts of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to **follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.***

When speaking of one's rite, the Code of Canon Law intends to include not only the rite in the strict liturgical sense of the word, but also the many facets of living one's faith as demonstrated by a particular liturgical, theological, spiritual, and disciplinary patrimony and distinguished by a people's determined culture and history. In some cases, this could imply the formal inscription to a Church *sui iuris*.

It is important that the scout chiefs acknowledge the norms that regulate the faithful's belonging to their respective Churches *sui iuris*. Where multiple Churches *sui iuris* are found in the same geographical area, it would be a singular opportunity as well as duty towards the scouts' education, to provide an instruction and sense of appreciation for their own rite as well as for the rites of others observed in the same area.

Can. 215 - *The Christian faithful are at liberty to freely found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.*

Apostolicam Actuositatem, 18

*The faithful are called to engage in the apostolate as individuals in the varying circumstances of their life. They should remember, nevertheless, that man is naturally social and that it has pleased God to unite those who believe in Christ into the people of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5-10) and into one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12). The **group apostolate of Christian believers then happily corresponds to a human and Christian need and at the same time signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ, who said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"** (Matt. 18:20).*

For this reason the faithful should participate in the apostolate by way of united effort.(2) They should be apostles both in their family communities and in their parishes and dioceses, which themselves express the community nature of the apostolate, as well as in the informal groups which they decide to form among themselves.

The group apostolate is very important also because the apostolate must often be performed by way of common activity both the Church communities and the various spheres. For the associations established for carrying on the apostolate in common sustain their members, form them for the apostolate, and rightly organize and regulate their apostolic work so that much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own.

This disposition of the Council has had two motivations, one for practical reasons, the other one for theological reasons.

The first motivation consists in the fact that, because of secularisation and anticlericalism, priests and ecclesiastics did not have access to many fields of society in various countries. Consequently – and this is the second fact – if the Church wanted to be present in those contexts, it could do it only through the lay people. At the time of the Council, the problem was particularly serious because of the "silence of the Church" beyond the iron curtain but also because of the increasing silence in the Western world.

The theological element was the one of a new comprehension of the Church as communion, which is expressed in the dogmatic Constitution about the Church "Lumen Gentium". Instead of the previous model of the inverted

pyramid, the Church was now considered as a reality structured in a hierarchical way, with various offices and functions; however in which any member possesses a fundamental equality in dignity and rights. In this sense, we talk of the Church as “Body of Christ” and “People of God”. Among the rights and duties of the members of the Church, which are derived from their baptism, their right-duty to take part in the mission of the Church has a fundamental importance. The generic term of this mission is apostolate. Consequently, the participation of lay people to the mission of the Church is precisely defined as “apostolate of lay people”.

As “Lumen Gentium” teaches it, the fact that lay people, as well as ecclesiastic and religious people, are called by God to pretend to the highest levels of holiness, to become saint, is fundamental too. This is very clearly expressed in the 5th chapter of the Constitution about the Church, whereas the situation of lay people towards the Church and towards mission is developed in the 4th chapter.

So the Decree on the apostolate of lay people is a practical and programmatic application of the principles established by “Lumen Gentium”, so that both documents are complementary.

What are the rights and duties of lay people towards the apostolate mentioned in the Decree and how are they applied to everyday life?

Contrarily to the settlement of the apostolate of lay people before the Council by the Catholic Action – in which it was a type of participation answering to a hierarchical delegation – the Council teaches that lay people have the right and the duty to promote apostolic actions, simply because they are members of the Church. The call to apostolate reaches the lay person by Christ and is founded on baptism and confirmation. It is not a kind of delegation by the hierarchy, even if lay people must obviously be allowed by the hierarchy to act on behalf of the Church. However, the Council endorses the idea of an autonomous apostolate of lay people, of two different sorts: individual apostolate and group apostolate. All Catholic lay people, men and women, who take part to some extent in a group apostolate, are called to practise an individual apostolate. All this is perfectly described in the Decree on the apostolate of lay people, whose fundamental message is : “Indeed, Christian vocation is also a vocation to apostolate, in its nature” (“Apostolicam Actuositatem, nr. 2). Lay people are called to apply this vision of apostolate in daily life, through a personal discernment. How does God call us, here and now, to serve our neighbour and to promote the redemptory work of Christ, what is the mission of the Church? The individual answer, based upon a vocational discernment, represents the specific form of apostolate that the person will practise. The others may give general advice, express various possible options but, in the end, the discernment of personal vocation is something that the person has to do personally. For scouts, the answer that applies these principles is expressed in the third scout principle :

Son of Christianity, the scout is proud of his faith ; he works to establish the reign of Christ in his whole life and in the world that surrounds him.

The fecundity of the apostolate of lay people depends on their vital union to Christ (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 4), that is to say a solid spirituality, nourished by the active participation to liturgy and expressed in the style of the evangelic Beatitudes. For lay people, besides, their professional competence, the sense of family, the sense of citizenship and social virtues are of great importance. If it is true that they are called individually to give their personal testimony, which is particularly precious where the freedom of the Church meets hindrances, the Council however insists on the importance of organised apostolate, necessary to influence general mentality, social conditions and institutions (cfr. Apostolicam Actuositatem, 8). On this point, the Fathers of the Council have encouraged the numerous associations of lay people, insisting on their formation to apostolate.

Can. 216 - Since they participate in the mission of the Church, all the Christian faithful have the right to promote or sustain apostolic action even by their own undertakings, according to their own state and condition. Nevertheless, no undertaking is to claim the name Catholic without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority.

Christian apostolate is not a monopoly.

Can. 217 - Since they are called by baptism to lead a life in keeping with the teaching of the gospel, the Christian faithful have the right to a Christian education by which they are to be instructed properly to strive for the maturity of the human person and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation.