

THE SCOUT LAW INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS ADVISORS – ROME 1996 2nd Conference

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1. The Scout Law is an expression of righteous and attractive life (Pope John Paul II)

1.1 The Scout Law is the law of the knight

On many occasions, B-P compared the Scout Law to that of the knights of the Middle Ages, recalling a number of similarities [1]:

- Never removing his armor, except for the nightly rest
- Going in search of adventure to gain “name and reputation”

- Defending the poor and the weak
- Reaching out to whoever asks rightly
- Not insulting one another
- Fighting for the defense and welfare of his country
- Working for honor, not for personal benefit
- Never failing at a promise for any reason whatsoever
- Sacrificing for the honor of his country
- Preferring to die with honor over fleeing ignominiously

He thought that the world of medieval chivalry would be fascinating to the boys' imagination, simultaneously acting on their moral sense.

The sense of adventure has always been an integral part of the world of the boy and of the youth, but the adventure of the Scout must lie in seeking to accomplish the good, and it has rules arising from a code of honor, including altruism, generosity, courtesy, loyalty, and religion, all as a standard of life.

The historical-imaginary context, the proposed adventure, experienced and not experienced, serve to create in the young a sense of justice that will reveal an important part of their character.

1.2. The Law is active

The Scout Law is a law that encourages action.

B-P wrote: "The Scout is active in DOING GOOD, not passive in BEING GOOD. It is his duty to be helpful and generous to other people" [2].

We must not forget that B-P was a son of England, where the empiricism of Locke and Hobbes were developed: the English are a pragmatic people, and B-P carried that culture in his first life experiences, and then in exploring. His powers of observation, his ability to read clues in things, but also his ability to perceive people, first as an officer and later as an educator, let him to emphasize this important aspect of our pedagogy – a boy is full of life and full of desire to act. Use these extraordinary capabilities to turn the formidable energies of youth to good!

1.3. The Law is positive

All Exploring is presented positively.

With his happy intuition and deep optimism, B-P understood that a youth can be destroyed by the failures and difficulties that life presents to him, and so offers a proposal full of confidence in the future. That is why the Law, as has already been said, does not consist of a series of prohibitions but rather a positive proposal to another end. In itself, the Law is a sign of optimism, a sign of confidence in the spiritual resources of youth.

Furthermore, the Law expresses the promising sense of life that the adult, i.e. the chief, entrusts to the boy.

B-P wrote: “The boy is not governed by DON’T, but is led on by DO. The Scout Law is devised as a guide to his actions rather than as repressive of his faults” [3].

This positive statement of the Law implies to the boy that he himself is the author of his own success, that he himself is able to grow by exerting his will.

The Law is the first major piece in the concept of self-education characteristic, in a revolutionary way, of the Scout education, which is not so much a form imposed, but a personal choice, because the life that is proposed is “righteous and attractive.”

In this regard, the Pope told us thus in a speech at St. Peter’s on the occasion of Eurojam:

“The Scout Law is your ideal. It calls you to develop the fundamental human values: honesty, loyalty, the sense of duty well done, the love of nature, and the service to your neighbour. The Scout method offers you precious instruments to build your personality. Beside you, you have some chiefs and adults who, by guiding you firmly, delicately, and patiently, wish to help you give the best of yourselves.

“In order to respect this law, a program of a righteous and attractive life, be aware of the importance of life in the Church and of the frequentation of sacraments” [4].

2. The Scout Law expresses profound human values and points to ways of freedom

2.1. Earning trust

This article is listed first because it is the most important – it is the one “on which the whole of a Scout’s future behaviour and discipline hangs” [5]. Indeed, it is a powerful lever acting on the sense of honour of the boy, who will take care not to fail the trust placed in him. All Exploring is based on the relationship between the leader, who shows he has confidence in the boy, and the boy, who will not fail to match this confidence.

In our society today, this approach sometimes perplexes families. We are so preoccupied with the idea of following our children that we don’t give them leeway for confidence and freedom, something we would not have supported ourselves in our own childhood.

I think all of us – parents, leaders, priests, and educators – should remember the pride aroused in us when we were young by a gesture of confidence in our relationships with adults. We could better succeed in practicing this article of the Law, which suffers more from the reluctance of adults to trust than the response of boys to respect it. Admittedly this is a risk sometimes, but all education is a risk! How do we imagine helping boys become men, men who can make choices, if we do not allow them to test whether they can be trusted? We must seek to train our young people to become strong in character, and work starts early when they are still small. We can no longer pretend to expect coherence in a youth if we do not instill principles and moral values in him from childhood. That is why it is both necessary and urgent to start education at school age with Timber Wolves.

2.2. Loyalty

To be a “good Christian and a good citizen,” the ultimate goal of Exploring, loyalty is certainly one of the essential virtues. The complete formulation of this article of the Law is as follows: “An Scout is loyal to his country, leaders, parents, and subordinates.”

It seems to me that this aspect of the Law is related to the first – a loyal person is one who can be trusted. Therefore loyalty is the basis of a mutually sincere relationship, as well as the basis of building a strong character, because one shows by his loyalty that he has dominion over the temptations related to ambition, to careerism, to opportunism.

This virtue is also an unpopular one at the current time (so one with this virtue is literally “swimming against the current”), because today we consider a person completed when he takes advantage of opportunities and seizes them, even if this comes at a moment of weakness or ignorance of others. But Exploring continues to be fascinating because it still believes in the human values that are fundamental to the Christian vision of life. And the sense of justice, which is so rooted in the young – not yet corrupt – finds its counterpart in one of the four cardinal virtues.

I think the idea of B-P’s, when he invited young people to go against the current, to know how to “paddle your own canoe” [6], is still extremely valuable today, when fad and fashion, so to speak, and even thought are so influenced by the mass media. And cuckoos and charlatans are found everywhere, unfortunately also in high places!

2.3. Spirit of service

“One step towards happiness is to make yourself healthy and strong while you are a boy, so that you can be useful and so can enjoy life when you are a man. ...But the real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people. Try and leave this world a little better than you found it ...” [7].

Again, with admirable consistency, B-P gives us the recipe for joy, which is to be an active force in the field of goodness. It is not enough to be good, we must “export” good to others. You can’t be happy for yourself; you can only find happiness if you give a little bit of yourself to others, which is the purpose of life for every man. And happiness is not in hedonism or sin, so fashionable in our youth, but in altruism. I’m reminded of the words of the Gospel: “Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me” [8].

It is in service to others, in fact, that the leader as well as the youth feels like a humble, poor, insignificant, but good collaborator with God, with all the anxiety that comes with this responsibility, but also with the joy of the “sinite parvulos” (let the little children come to me) [9].

“Always be ready [*estote semper parati*] to serve others” requires not only physical and technical preparation, but also fortitude, solid moral preparation, because service is not only asked when it is beautiful, satisfying, and rewarding, but also when the service it doesn’t

appear in the newspapers, when it is so humble that others don't notice. And then service – which is to say, to be dedicated with humility to what is required – can also be tedious. Finally, our neighbor is the nearest neighbor, the one who lives next to us, or the one in our family, our parish, or our Scout unit. Demonstrations in favor of distant situations are useless: they are often ephemeral, mounted off the cuff by the media, without any personal sacrifice – but service requires specific commitments, concrete, sometimes difficult but useful, even in modest interventions. “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” [10].

2.4. Friendship and brotherhood

These are two very important concepts, which are highlighted by this article of the Law, concepts with ancient resonances: the word “friendship” [Fr. *amitié*] comes, in fact, from the word “amo” [“love”]; and “brotherhood” [Fr. *fraternité*] from an Indo-European term that clarifies relationships within the family: brothers [Fr. *frères*] are the sons of the same father. In other words, we could say that this article expresses benevolent relationships in all who meet [“an Scout is a friend to all”] and a kind of kinship with those who have chosen the same Scout ideal [“and a brother to every other Scout”]. It is beautiful to feel the ability to accommodate everyone with availability, with understanding, but without closure of soul and without harm.

If we could testify to a state of soul truly based on friendship, O! how each of our days would be more serene! And what joy we would spread around us if we could free our hearts from the prejudices and defenses we've erected around them!

“If a boy only makes himself wear a cheery countenance in the street, it is something. It brightens up numbers of his passers-by. To get the boy to do this as a step to greater happifying is a thing worth trying for” [11].

And then there is the fellowship with all the other members of the great Exploring family. For a boy, for a youth, for a leader, it is wonderful to know that anywhere in the world he may go, he will find his brothers. The world opens wide, it becomes readable, knowable, decipherable. And one can enjoy the web of relationships between people who are united by the same fraternal bond. His country, his continent, the world will be the boundaries of the man, because in Christ all men are brothers!

2.5. Courtesy and chivalry

These are two aspects of character which – at first glance – seem secondary. And yet, we have all enjoyed in our lives when someone has addressed us with courtesy, taking the time to explain things, treating us as people of value, whether at a store counter or in a classroom.

And let us understand that these two aspects do not clash in a strong character: a person is strong when he can overcome his difficulties and not get carried away, when he is master of himself, his impulses, his emotions, his immediate reactions, not when he raises his voice or behaves coarsely, brutally, or vulgarly.

Courtesy and the spirit of chivalry were proper to the knights of the Middle Ages, who remain always the ideal point of reference for boys, provided their leader is careful to emphasize this. B-P certainly does not rely on knight servants, and his famous phrase, that an Scout must be “acceptable at a dance and invaluable in a shipwreck” [51] shows this, without a doubt. But he wants to refine a boy’s spirit because, if he has this sensitivity, he can smile at a friend or someone in trouble, raise his character traits and act accordingly, soften the wounds of the soul – in a word, be useful to others.

2.6. Ability to marvel at creation

Exploring is the outdoor life and the science of the forest.

Why does B-P insist upon the outdoor life? Not only for the purpose of health, though life outdoors is undoubtedly more beneficial than life in the city with pollution and noise. Not only because the atmosphere of nature lends itself to the adventure, providing large spaces, difficulties to overcome, the particular climate of Scouts and pioneers; while in-town adventures – where they exist – are unwholesome, or only admit us as spectators (such as going to the movies), not as actors.

Not only because nature is a healthy atmosphere, as opposed to the corrupt moral atmosphere of the city. But also because, by her beauty, she fascinates the boy, and – he being amazed by the thousands of things she can show him – offers him the sense of the existence of a Creator.

“Nature study will show you how full of beautiful and wonderful things God has made the world for you to enjoy” [12].

In addition, through the study of plants and animals, the boy understands that sex also belongs to the wonderful plan of God, and he acquires the sense of poetry, abandoning the whole atmosphere of morbidity and defilement that is characteristic of certain mass media, unfortunately all too common today.

This is the section of the Law that calls for love of plants and animals, which includes the profound teaching to take care of all that are weak or in need of protection, which God has willed to depend on man. In this way, the boy acquires a delicate soul that he will always retain, as well as respect for an atmosphere that he will pass on, freely, to those that come after him.

2.7. Respect for authority

The theme of authority is debated extensively in our day when it seems that individual freedom has become a fetish or idol to which all other values must submit. True authority should not be based on authoritarianism, but rather on competence.

Perhaps the critique of authority was born as a critique of authoritarianism, but went far beyond, in 1968, to overthrow everything that tasted of authority. Authority has now been replaced by a vague concept of shared duties, powers, and responsibilities which have themselves become more diffuse and less distinct. Conversely, Exploring has always believed

in the value of an authority born of skills, experience, and availability. This authority is not subject to criticism or debate, because it is useful and necessary.

The patrol chief is the one who leads the patrol, who knows how to do more and better, who knows the secrets to winning the wide games and camping in all types of weather. But he also knows how to recognize when everyone is tired; he knows how to encourage and console, to help those who are in trouble.

Thus, there is no need to shout to be heard – all follow him, because all appreciate him and hold him in high esteem. In the same way, a chief who respects himself will correct and encourage, incite and help, talk and pray, laugh and cry with his Scouts: he becomes their friend without ever being identified with them, remaining for them a sure point of reference.

The Scout often obeys the orders of his superiors with ease, because they know how to give them accurately, opportunely, and appropriately. He obeys them as easily as orders given by his family, but understood, little by little, beyond the person who gives the orders, it is the availability and generosity to execute them that matter.

2.8. Joy and good humor: self-control

This article of the Law seems to be of little importance – somewhat childish even for little ones. On the contrary, it contains all the philosophy of knowing how to put earthly things in perspective, because even the most important things will never have absolute value.

This does not mean doing things approximately or superficially, or leaving them almost done; it means to engage one's commitments seriously, but with a reserve of good humor, confidence, and hope in their success, for it is this serenity itself that bodes well for the future.

It also means looking to the future with optimism; it means surrendering to Providence even in difficult times, because this, by contrast, is an absolute value!

Finally, this article highlights the value of self-education, which is obtained through self-control. "Self-control is three parts of Character" [13]. And the best time to prove one's self-control, is it not when he is in trouble? If he has the capacity to smile at himself, at the disputes in which he finds himself, he will certainly have more great opportunities to overcome difficulties in the end!

2.9. Respect for things and personal initiative

This section of the Law is very relevant! Today, our boys do not understand the value of things because they often get everything right away, without having done anything to get it – school books, a stereo, a motorcycle. ... But adults have also lost a sense of respect for that what belongs to the community – the common good.

One of the most educational aspects of exploring is to work to get something desired, and even more for the youth to build something with their own hands. I still remember with great pride the tent that my patrol was able to acquire economically – an old tent, army surplus, to

which we made many modifications to make it habitable, but which we liked immensely because it was really ours.

Exploring can do much in this area – the patrol corner, whether local or at camp must be the result of the initiative, creative imagination, and ardor of the whole patrol. Unfortunately, today it has become much more uncommon than before to have to do things oneself and, therefore, have the skilled hands to use the tools adapted to build useful or just beautiful things. Exploring is one of the few educational movements to use manual labor as a means of personal growth. And a boy who relishes the freedom in doing things for himself will remember it all his life, and will always experience the joy of being able to meet his desires and the desires of those close to him.

2.10. Correction in thoughts, words and deeds

The Law was written for boys, for whom the issue of purity is one of the most critical – and not just for them. The proposal is positive, as usual: “A Scout is clean,” that is, *pure*, is equivalent to saying that whoever wants to be an Scout must be pure.

I always liked the three successive terms because the first determines the other two. If one is pure in thought, then he will be pure in word and deed. Pure in thought, that is, in the soul, means that an Scout has cultivated his appreciation of beauty before all: he has seen and lived and wants to live and see beautiful things, like friendship, loyalty, fidelity, self-respect and respect for others, his patrol and his troop. He understands what it means to be responsible for those younger than he – he knows what it means to be trusted.

He saw wonderful performances in the woods, during outings; he savored the warmth of campfires; he felt the joy of being a brother among brothers. A boy or youth who has cultivated his affective dimension so harmoniously will develop a deep respect in his relationships with girls – for whom he might feel an attraction – because they also fit into a positive world, made of strong and happy feelings.

To me, it is poetry that we must cultivate in our youth, the sensitivity of the soul, the sense of respect. If we manage to teach them respect for things, will it not be easier to teach them respect for others? And then, we have already initiated relationships in the patrol between the chief and the tenderfoot, with the transmission of ideas, with loads of action, with times when the greater help the smaller – all for the good of the community.

In the patrol, the chief will lead by example and the others will understand that prestige does not come from pretending to be great by using big words, but in fulfilling one's duty, successfully completing his enterprises with initiative and intelligence, with courage and understanding. In a world of respect, there will be no place for indecent words or actions or for dirty jokes, and those who would dare propose them are excluded.

But it is incumbent upon us too, we educators, the responsibility to speak clearly and not let in the nuances of speech, the ambiguity of interpretation. In the moral relativism that prevails today, we must use clear expressions of condemnation for everything that goes against the teachings of the Magisterium. We will say that it is not lawful to have sexual relations before marriage, even if current society tolerates it, if it does not simply approve.

We believe, in contrast, that we will not be able to form strong personalities embodying all the qualities of the Scout Law if our youth lack the self-control to be able to overcome their own instincts.

3. The Law as a road to holiness

3.1 Saint George – a knight who fought for good against evil

B-P chose St. George as a patron saint of Scout for various reasons – he is the patron of cavalry, therefore B-P could use his figure in keeping with the whole environment of which we have spoken above; in addition, he is an extremely fascinating saint for youth because he was adventurous, brave, and bold.

His short life ended in martyrdom in 303 under Emperor Diocletian, because he was not willing to sacrifice to pagan gods before the Roman governor, Nicomedes in Bithynia (one of the the four capitals of the Roman Empire at the time, according to the tetrarchy formula).

B-P used the famous legend of St. George's fight against the dragon, to release the princess; this legend perhaps arose from a misinterpretation which called the Roman governor a "snake." This legend had an extraordinary impact on literature and the arts, and figured in popular traditions. And the name of the holy martyr became famous worldwide [14]. B-P "took advantage" of the opportunity, if you will, to create an easy symbol to exemplify good vs. evil, as can be read in *Scouting for Boys* [15]. But it is good that this asset has already been mentioned, to be full of courage, not only against the dragons of legend, but against all the dragons of our weaknesses, our temptations, and our selfishness.

Suffice it to say that we need to be as strong as St. George to keep us healthy, morally ready to challenge this monster called human respect, and the other called selfishness, such a burden on youth.

St. George was not afraid to face danger, even without proper armor, without the favor of others, without surety of reappointment. He left with his spear because he felt that it was right and necessary to do so; he would have been ashamed to use those excuses that appeal both to people who are right-thinking, but timid, and to those with an extremely flexible conscience.

Others might have called him reckless, inconsiderate, a braggart; but he knew that someone was in danger and that he would be risking his life for that person. No boy would drop at such a high level of adventure, bravery, and generosity, because it is typical for a young person to take risks when the goal is noble and altruistic.

The idea of rushing to defend a lady in danger stimulates the courage of youth and encourages them to perform heroic gestures, pure chivalry. The feast of St. George, April 23, must be celebrated in memory of all Scouts, big or small, and these attributes of boldness, generosity, and courage for such a good and noble goal.

3.2. Saint Francis of Assisi – the knight of Lady Poverty, the knight who does good and enjoys the wonders of creation

St. Francis was chosen as the patron of Timber Wolves because he is a saint full of goodness, gentleness, and sensitivity. He is strong. His figure is not steeped in legend as is that of St. George, but is concrete, historical, and documented.

And yet there is also about St. Francis a legendary aura of candor, present especially in the “Fioretti” [the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, stories from the saint’s life and work]. But it must be a candor born of wonder, felt the brothers who followed the master, enchanted by his holy simplicity and his friendship with animals both mild and fierce. The Saint spoke to them with the simplicity of heart of one who has gotten rid of all human “packaging” before developing an appetite for luxury, power, or success.

This behavior is full of instruction for Timber Wolves, boy and girl, and can fill us, especially leaders, with shame, if we fail to match this sensibility – happy in freedom from greed – with our own – sometimes too dependent on the opinions and requirements expressed by what we call “Society,” an ambiguous word that allows us to justify ourselves perhaps a little too quickly.

And yet, one who has learned to take the road less traveled [50], who has enjoyed the water of clear mountain streams, who has felt the goodness, beauty, and warmth of the evening fire, who has felt his face touched by a warm breeze on a spring day or whipped by the cutting wind of winter, who has helped a brother in difficulty, shared with him a last sip of water, can understand the message of the revolutionary “Poverello” [little poor man] of Assisi. This message is not revolutionary merely because of the refusal or extreme reduction of wealth – for which, nevertheless, many men sacrifice attachments, time, and energy – but because it is a message of simplicity, and only those who are as simple as children enter the kingdom.

Thus it is that whoever drives in a car cannot hear the whisper of wind through the woods in a mysterious rustling; thus it is that one cannot stop himself from facing, in ecstasy, the splendor of a hidden mountain flower giving glory to its Creator with all its beauty, impossible to reproduce.

In the message of St. Francis, there is great poetry, great philosophy, and especially a great faith that pacifies the soul of one who does not deal in the petty quarreling and desires of the rich.

3.3. Saint Paul – the witness of Christ, who spread His word¹

The Apostle to the Gentiles is one of the most important figures in all of Christendom and was chosen, entirely appropriately, to be the patron of Rovers [Wayfarers].

His conversion – the ruthless persecutor of Christians becomes their defender, the choice of a total dimension of Christianity beyond the narrow limits and almost self-complacency of Judaism, the challenge to the pagan world, the learned Greek culture to the “foolishness” of Christ – his courage, his determination to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles, his

¹ The Educational project of the UIGSE gives Saint Paul as saint patron of the Rovers. Thus, other associations have chosen Saint John the Baptist (France) or Saint Jacob the Elder (Germany) as patron of the Rovers.

adventures, voyages, and shipwrecks, even his political consciousness of his rights as a Roman citizen – all this impacts and fascinates young people who, in many cases, never ask for anything more than to be guided along the way of truth and courage. Saint Paul becomes the model of strong witness – uncompromising, courageous, and open.

And it is this witness that is asked of the young Rover, contrary to the malady of juvenile conformity, that he adapt himself to the atmosphere in which he finds himself. Conversely, we ask of the young Rover that he testify to his membership in our association, in all its Exploring and Catholic richness, with his uniform, his activities, his presence at Holy Mass, and his assistance during natural disasters.

The Rover should be proud of his choices, which were made with the full consciousness of a free person, through the testimony of his brother Rovers, his chiefs, and with the help of his religious advisers.

This clarity will help him to tackle the challenges that adulthood will certainly present to him. And there will always be the knowledge and experience of moral preparation begun in pre-adolescence.

3.4. Saint Catherine of Siena – the woman of peace²

“But the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling.” [16]

Before this letter existed, Saint Catherine of Siena lived its message, becoming, in her own house, an ambassador of peace to her city, to her nation, and to the whole Church. In her great work of peace, she was supported by a burning love for the truth of the Gospel. “My nature is fire,” says the Saint, and this is not merely a psychological recognition of her mystical being, but the program of a great believer who decides to pass her “sacred fire” on to others, a fire fed daily by the Word of God and the Eucharist.

This is the same fire that gives life to the training of our Senior Guides [girl Wayfarers] and this is the element that makes real the union of so many hearts.

In meetings or around the campfire, the community of Senior Guides reflects on this ideal woman, communicates proposals, and ignites within itself a deep love for others. But, just as with St. Catherine, the flame is fed daily by prayer, the Eucharist, and the practice of charity.

“If you are what you ought to be, you will set fire,” not only in your small circle but in the entire world. The way is clear. The formation of the Senior Guide is achieved by living commitments made with determination, by deepening her faith, by working to be an instrument of peace and harmony in the hands of God.

² In the Educational Project of the UIGSE (Aug 25th 2005), Sainte Catherine of Siena is not named as specific patron for the Senior Guides. This is an Italian specificity.

“Make a cell in your heart, and a heaven from a cell.”

The interior life is a valid in which young people must be educated, and the cell becomes a place of reflection and prayer from which the apostolic fire emerges. Saint Catherine is an example of a woman of character and faith who was able to achieve her mission – and that is why the Italian association chose her as the patroness and protectrix of the Senior Guide branch.

4. Pedagogy of holiness through observance of the Scout Law

4.1. Values are interiorized through action: the Good Turn

B-P expresses with great clarity from a passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew [17] what Christian love in Exploring ought to be – it must pass on the basic spirit of Christianity, summarized in these two commandments: love God, and love your neighbor – in a way most suited to each age [18].

To teach the love of God, Exploring promotes the study of nature as the most visible and obvious sign of the goodness of the Creator. The road is only a means, not a substitute, but it is essential in laying the right foundation for a profound religiosity.

And when the young soul is well prepared by wonder, by reflecting on the greatness and magnanimity of God, it will be easy, then, to hand down religious belief institutionally. But be careful of the psychological characteristics of children and youth, who can have difficulty grasping the theological-spiritual message if it is not preceded by a message more understandable, more immediate. Indeed, while the spirit passes right by a righteous action among the smallest and also the greatest, it is action that is inspired by the spirit. That is why the everyday Good Turn is fundamental at the Timber Wolf and Scout age – because it is through concrete action that the spirit of willingness to help others grows in boys. The good habit will become, thereafter, the choice to serve in the road. This is the reason why the text of the Promise says “to serve God” – it is an action that can be done, rather than “loving God,” which remains a theoretical formula.

Through duty to God, B-P put the care of oneself, care and respect of one’s body and spirit, as gifts of God; we know, unfortunately, how much this duty is neglected today in the world of youth, who believe that life itself is private property and a toy for one’s self-amusement.

Even the procreation of the species belongs to an order willed by God and that is why it is a duty for the Scout to respect it, and thus even issues relating to adolescent sexuality acquire a religious dignity [19]. Similarly, respect for plants and animals belongs to the duties of the Scout, since they are his companions here on earth.

To teach the love of neighbor, it is necessary to promote this feeling so active and to appeal to the figure of Christ, our true Master, Who teaches us through His Word and concrete actions. Thus is born the joy of service for free, generously – from small services made at home to people in need, to the commitments of the Rover, in favor of less fortunate boys of whatever

institution or of isolated elderly people, or, in a way more importantly, during natural disasters.

In doing so the Gospel message becomes more understandable and more present, because a youth understands only that which he has had the opportunity to experience. Otherwise, the sense of service to others is likely to be limited to Sunday almsgiving!

4.2. The game of Exploring takes place under the Law that applies to the young as well as to the leaders, inspiring the programs and regulating the activities

One of the most valuable tools that the leader has to educate his Scouts is the example. In effect, the leader becomes a hero for his boys, because it is an adult who speaks with them, who appreciates them, who treats them like adults; whereas the family environment is often slow to perceive the pre-adolescent and adolescent changes.

In addition, the leader knows many secrets of life in the open air, he knows how to overcome difficulties insurmountable in the eyes of the boys, he can invent activities and great games; he can talk, he can sing, he can rejoice; he knows how to entertain and to have fun with them. But all this admiration also becomes an immense responsibility, and one who carries the burden of leadership in the association must be conscious of it: the boys, in fact, seek to imitate him in everything, in his positive aspects but also, unfortunately, in his negative ones.

And an Scout unit reflects its leader: his courtesy or his bad temper, his patience or irritability, his punctuality or negligence – all these features will become common throughout the unit. Responsibility becomes even greater in the moral sphere: the leader's correction will be imitated but also, sadly, his superficiality.

Thus, before entrusting a unit to a young leader, the group leader must be sure – the young must give greater guarantees of a certain maturity and morality, because Exploring can do much good, if well lived, but a lot of trouble as well if practiced in a superficial way, with the real risk of corrupting youth instead of educating them.

The criterion for judging the quality of a leader is his adherence to the Scout Law. The Law is not a plaything, it is not a matter only for kids, but rather it is the moral bond that unites all members of the association and even, I daresay, the movement.

“Therefore, to get them to carry out the Scout Law and all that underlies it, the [leader] himself should scrupulously carry out its professions in every detail of his life. With scarcely a word of instruction his boys will follow him” [20].

It is under the auspices of the law that programs are designed and activities proposed, so they have an educational value. Indeed, there can be a vague, neutral version of Exploring – because every action, every gesture, every word exchanged between the leader and the learner has an educational value ... or a negative one.

4.3 The Law is also a prayer

Every section of the Law can be read in a religious sense, and this is perhaps the most fascinating way to lead a boy to a spiritual dimension, to make him understand that “his” Law is profound, is something for adults as well, and for which it is worth fighting against the approval imposed by our society. But Rovers and leaders will also find nourishment and points of reflection, once they have been able to examine their heart and soul.

I give here only a few examples, article by article, on how one can reflect on the Law, building on some activities of the association [21].

1. A scout's honor is to be trusted.

Trust is the counterpart of that which we are able to give to others without reservation, but with generosity and altruism. One obtains this trust if he lives in a manner consistent with the values advocated by the Gospel.

As St. Paul writes: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another. For he that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law. For Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness: Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law” [22].

2. A scout is loyal to his country, his parents, his leaders and to those who depend on him.

Loyalty is the ability to be honest with oneself and others and to be faithful to the law that he has chosen.

“But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil” [23]. That our words are always courteous and filled of hope, that we know how to respond to one another [24] by building up and not by destroying.

Jesus has harsh words for the one who acts for the sake of convenience or for that of appearance before others instead of relying on a profound choice. “The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not; for they say, and do not” [25].

Loyalty also means consistency and constancy of behavior. Mostly it means to be open to the truth, for those who know how to listen to the true voice – the shepherd and not the thief: “Amen, amen I say to you: He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them: and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers” [26].

3. A scout is made to serve and save his neighbour

It is service in love that ensures that one is of service to his brothers. Usually, the leaders of nations, the kings and princes, are done service by others, by servants, while in Christianity it is the greatest who provides for the least. “But he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth” [27]. It is precisely through the example of Jesus that one can understand that to serve, he must be in the last place, because he who makes himself small can receive the confidences of the least, of the one who is in trouble; he can become the friend of those who suffer. Certainly, those at the top have neither the means nor the time to render help to others. “For which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is it not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth” [28].

4. A scout is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout.

At the beginning of this reflection, it is appropriate to recall the words of St. Paul, which should represent the gold standard of mutual aid on the difficult path of brotherhood: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom ... [and] whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” [29].

And also: “Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honor of God” [30]. Then our communities will become places where we will educate for life, where each of us will be saved gradually from its boundaries, provided that we welcome the command of Jesus: “That you love one another, as I have loved you” [31].

In this way, we truly know how to recognize every one as a brother in Christ. And friendship and brotherhood will make us “one soul” as in the earliest Christian communities, related in the Acts of the Apostles: “And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul: neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed, was his own; but all things were common unto them” [32].

Let us quote once more the words of the Holy Father: “For you in particular, this means to work within the wide family of Scouts, whose brothers and sisters you are, with your specific method. If you apply the commandment of love, Jesus says that ‘everyone will know that you are my disciples’ (Jn 13, 35)” [33].

5. A scout is courteous and chivalrous.

Courtesy and chivalry signify respect for everyone we meet, so that we can recognize in them a depth of dignity because they are made in the image and likeness of God. We must reinforce these concepts, especially today where freedom is understood as a selfish and individualistic sense, when for us it must be a common value that promotes and respects the dignity and maturity of every person.

Remember the wise rule that Christ teaches us: “All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets” [34]. We, adult educators, leaders, and assistance – we have received another commandment of Jesus, a commandment that must be at the forefront of our educational activities, if we want them to have value beyond our inevitable failures: “Love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you” [35].

6. A scout sees in nature God’s creations; he likes plants and animals.

In Genesis, after creating man, God put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and guard it. And He created all wildlife, and He brought all the birds and beasts to the man so that he could name them, and the name the man gave them was to be their name [36].

In another passage of Genesis, we read: “Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth” [37].

The Biblical story shows that the man was placed on earth to have dominion over other living things, so that he can utilize them according to his needs, but also for safekeeping. This is what distinguishes us from the modern practices of environmentalists, who would, if possible, oust man from the earth in order to defend it. Exploring, on the contrary, teaches that creation is the visible work of God, which must be respected, known, and protected – but not idolized.

Through the contemplation of nature, the Scout has the intuition of the existence of God; through the awareness of nature, the Scout discovers the beauty and grand majesty of creation. “For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity” [38].

7. A scout obeys willingly and does not half do things.

Obedience is not the mechanical execution of orders but responsible participation in what is being asked because one recognizes the authority of the one who leads. Then obedience becomes maturity and participation, not submission and passivity.

Our model of obedience must be that Jesus Who obeyed the Father and His way, and Who obeyed Mary and St. Joseph. In this sense, to obey means to learn to serve.

Speaking of Jesus, Scripture affirms that “entering the world,” He said, “Behold I come ... that I should do thy will, O God” [39]. This obedience of Jesus has its conclusion on the Cross. Jesus, yet God, “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” [40]. Only the obedience of Jesus could fix the disobedience of our first parents [41].

8. A scout controls himself: he smiles and sings even under difficulties.

Man is greater than the realities that surround him, and he is called by vocation to exceed these even if the way is narrow and difficult and there are few who have the courage and perseverance to travel it [42].

To know how to smile is a way of living events, inserting them into a broader framework, knowing that nothing in our lives is permanent but that everything is geared toward new conquests that help us to see with gratitude all that which surrounds us.

To know how to smile in difficulties is the wisdom that is born in one who knows that everything is important, but for man the possibility of realizing this more than especially difficult. It is also the wisdom to know how to cultivate in oneself an absolute value capable of giving meaning to our lives and putting everything around us into perspective.

Saint Paul also reminds us when he says: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice” [43]. And again: “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content therewith. I know both how to be brought low, and I know how to abound: (everywhere, and in all things I am instructed) both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need. I can do all these things in him who strengtheneth me” [44].

9. A scout is thrifty and takes care of his own possessions and those of others.

Jesus lived his life hidden in a poor but hardworking and happy family. There were so poor that at the Presentation they could offer only a pair of turtledoves [45]. They lived their work: St. Joseph was a carpenter, as was Our Lord, as pointed out in the Gospel of Mark [46].

His mother kept the house, with all the love of a mother who sees a son growing under her eyes – a son willed by God, the Son of God. Probably she also wove with great skill and care, the robe Jesus wore at the time of His crucifixion.

“They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be” [47].

It is therefore a family of modest means, that lives in its work, that knows how to use the limited resources available to it.

It is necessary that we succeed in making our youth understand that work is not a punishment, but the joy of being a collaborator with God. But this cannot happen unless one knows how to confine work within the limits of family needs, by merely satisfying legitimate aspirations. Work can be a punishment if done out of an obsession with gain, the desire for wealth. Our Lord always has projects for us that we exceed our ambitions and put them into perspective. Let us remember the parable of the rich landowner who decided to pull down his barns so as to build larger ones [48].

10. A scout is pure in his thoughts, his words, and his acts.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” [49]. The meaning of this term means not only the purity of gaze, words and gestures towards oneself and to others, even if it does not exclude them. The Gospel says much more:

Blessed is he whose heart is not shared with false interests.

Blessed is he who does not sell by interest.

Blessed is he who knows how to serve God and man with his whole self without calculating.

Blessed is he who has a pure heart to serve people, not use them.
Blessed is he who does not consent to be possessed or used.
Blessed is he who does not lose his head out of jealousy for his freedom.
Blessed is he who is himself and helps others to become themselves when he lives, speaks,
and acts with them.
Blessed is he who knows how to enrich others by giving the best of himself and is open to the
same gifts from others.
He will have a real experience of God: he shall see Him!

ENDNOTES

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