

Faith Story: "God Is the Center of Scouting"
by Cole Ellenbogen
Given on Scouting Recognition Sunday, February 13, 2011

As a Scout, every week, we say the Scout law, like we did this morning with the lighting of the candles. When you say something that often, it starts to become part of your life, changes how you think, and how you act. "A scout is reverent," is part of the Scout law, it is the most important part of the Scout law. In fact, reverence should be the most important part of life, because without God, there is nothing.

The founder of scouting Baden Powel himself once said:

"There is no religious side to the Scout Movement. The whole of it is based on religion, that is on becoming aware of God and His service"

Baden Powel explains here that reverence is not just a point of the scout law, not a part of scouting. He says that religion is what scouting is based on, and being aware of God. As a group of people who hold reverence as one of the twelve most important things in life, I believe, just as Baden Powel did, that all scouts should be steadfast in their faith, whatever that faith may be. A good scout believes whole heartedly in his religion. This is not because reverence is a single point in the scout law; it is because without God, there is no scouting.

Boy Scouts is about coming together as brothers to enjoy God's creation. When we go on trips, we can see God's work in its undisturbed form. Nature is a work of art, and God the artist. Looking at his creation and denying him is like looking at a beautiful painting and claiming that it painted itself. It is ludicrous. Scouting is, in its own way, a means of proving the existence of God. . In Scouting, we have been given a gift, a reassurance that our faith is very real. Sadly however, not everyone has been blessed with this opportunity, and others still fail to see what Boy Scouting accomplishes in terms of reverence. These are the people that we are called to reach out to.

Baden Powel recognized this as well when he created scouting. Just to be reverent to God is not enough if you are keeping the love of God to yourself. Baden Powel wanted the scouts to take their faith and spread it to others, which is why kindness and helpful are also included in the Scout Law. God's teachings are the same: love thy neighbor as thy self, treat others to the same blessings that you have been given. Be kind to the people around you.

I say the Scout Law every week because it is important to me. In my opinion, the Scout Law is the cornerstone of Boy Scouts. It affects my day to day life because it influences the way I think, as it is intended to influence the way all Scouts think. For the same reason, in my church, St. John's, I say the prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross, that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace, so clothe us in your spirit, that we reaching forth our hands in love may bring those who do not know you, to the knowledge and love of you, in the honor of your name. Amen

This is the prayer that inspired me to build the prayer area here. This is my own Church's prayer for mission. I wanted to take the word of my Lord and savior, and spread it to others. This is what I believe in. I thought of my project as a way to help

this church which has been so good to my troop and me, and to carry out the mission statement of my Church: to know Christ and to make him known. Jesus once said to a crowd: "Listen, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil, and brought forth grain, some a hundred fold..."

In this parable from the Gospel according to Mathew, the seeds refer to faith. Some of us are lucky enough to have a good environment to develop our faith, but not everyone does. Some are held back by the skepticism of others, and more still live in an environment where faith is unimportant. It is safe to say that the world of Scouting can be considered good soil: we have breathtaking experiences involving God's creation to reassure our faith, and we spend time amongst other Scouts who are trying to grow as we are, not "thorns" that are trying to tear down our faith. Those of us who are lucky enough to have fallen into good soil should answer the call to help spread the word of God to others, and I count Scouts among them. God is clearly the center of Scouting; that much is obvious. Scouting is a brotherhood: we are all children of God. But isn't everyone a son or daughter of God? Doesn't that make us all brothers and sisters? Maybe not all of them are in the brotherhood of scouting, but God still wants us to extend our kindness, (the kindness that we claim to demonstrate every week,) to everyone. But how?

Hopefully faith in God has been made more secure for us Scouts by our extraordinary and direct encounters with creation. What is more difficult is figuring out where you go from there. Scouts, have fallen in good soil, and therefore should try to instill faith in others. There are many ways to go about doing this; I chose to help this Church spread the word of God by building a cross here. But it is my opinion that we are all called to spread the word of God in our own unique way. I built the cross because I was called to. God did not create all of us to act the same way, and like the same things, so why would he want us all to do the same thing? We are individuals. We all have a different calling, a different purpose. I believe God wants all of us to show our devotion in different ways that express this individuality he gave us. So do what you feel that you are called to do, then explain that you were called to do it. That is the critical part. When people see what you are willing to do for your faith, it may instill faith in them, and help them find a connection to God. Helping others is another point of the Scout law. "A scout is helpful." In fact, when discussing God and one's purpose, it is hard not to mention points of the Scout law. This is because Scouting was built around God, therefore anywhere you look in Scouting God can be found. God calls us to do the same things that the Scout Law tells us to do. Both offer moral guidance. Both are critical to Scouting, critical to life. In my opinion, the Scout law is a summary of what God wants all of his children to be: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent. Therefore, if God's word directs Scouting, God must be at its center. So if you are a seed that fell on good soil, then you are blessed. Take this blessing and spread it, make known your love and devotion to God; whether it is because you are compelled to do so through calling, or because

every point of the scout law urges you to, for they are the same. Baden Powel built Scouting upon the foundation of God; the Scout law is a vehicle for God's word. God is in the very fabric of Boy Scouting, at its center. Because without God, scouting cannot be, and without Scouting, there would be far less who have witnessed the power of God in his creation, and spread his word to others.