Pope Francis Meets with International Catholic Conference of Scouting Leadership

By Bray Barnes, ICCS World Chairman

The reality of having met with our Holy Father has not yet fully set in; however, I am truly humbled to have had the opportunity to have a private audience on Saturday, January 25, 2014 and represent Catholic Scouting.

Several months ago, Fr. Jacques Gagey, ICCS World Chaplain, and I prepared a letter to the Prefect of the Papal Household, Archbishop Georg Ganswein, on behalf of ourselves and ICCS World President Roberto Cociancich requesting an audience as international Catholic Scouting celebrates its 100th Anniversary. We asked if we could possibly meet during the time when we would be together in Rome in February for the St. Paul Fellowship events and ICCS Foundation meeting.

On Tuesday morning, January 21, 2014, I received an early morning call from Fr. Jacques who advised me that our ICCS office in Rome was contacted by the Vatican advising us that His Holiness Pope Francis granted us an audience on Saturday morning, January 25.

As we walked through St. Peter’s Square, we discussed our message and could not help noticing the long lines of pilgrims waiting to enter St. Peter’s Basilica. Arriving at the assigned gate, we presented our invitation and were escorted by the Vatican Security through the labyrinth of the Papal offices. We passed several check points guarded by Swiss Guards. Each saluted as we walked by, reminding us that we were about to meet the Vicar of Christ. As we exited the elevator delivering us to the Papal offices, we marveled at the splendor and walked the hall that so many Church and world leaders walked for years.

Entering the papal offices, we were greeted by the Gentlemen of the Papal Household with “Ahh, the Scouts!” We passed through several beautiful rooms, each decorated in a specific color, all with the Papal Seal embedded in the tapestry, upholstery and drapery. As we approached the waiting room, we were greeted by the Pope’s Monsignor Secretary and Archbishop Ganswein, the Prefect of the Papal Household.

As we waited, I spoke about our chaplains and how they donate so much of themselves to Catholic Scouting. I told them of our chapel in Philmont and how Scouts are offered daily Mass. I also told them about the St. George Trek which has helped with the priestly vocations. Both the Bishop and Monsignor thanked us for our work and how important and wonderful it was that we fulfill this mission of serving youth.

At that moment, a small chime sounded and the Monsignor immediately opened the door to the Office of Pope Francis. As I was the first to enter, I saw a very large conference table surrounded by high back white chairs set upon a beautiful Oriental rug on a highly polished marble floor. To my right was a desk with 3 white guest chairs. Standing alongside the desk was the Holy Father who extended his right hand. As I greeted the Pope, he smiled and welcomed me. Roberto followed with Fr. Jacques. Photos were taken and we presented him with a Dove-shaped lamp mounted on a base with a brass plate stating “Keep the Lamp Burning”.

(continued on page 8)
RIP Josef Paul Kessler

NCCS Executive Secretary – 1969-1986
Josef Paul Kessler, age 90, was born September 12, 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri and passed away December 26, 2013 at Overland Park, Kansas. Joe served in the Army during World War II. After graduating from Rockhurst College he began his career with The Boy Scouts of America in 1950. His career culminated when he received "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" from the Vatican before retiring from the BSA in 1986 as National Secretary for Catholic Scouting. Joe was the driving force behind the National Catholic Committee on Scouting for 16 years. He recruited many of the leaders and worked with many of the bishops in our country.

Prayer Request

Due to the large number of deaths this past quarter, we will not be able to list all the names. Please see our Facebook page for the announcements. May they all rest in peace.

Get the latest information on NCCS on our website at nccs-bsa.org and follow us on Facebook at: facebook.com/nccs.bsa.

Thanks to Tony Madonia, Jr. for editing this issue of The Bridge while editor, Mike Gannon, recovers from his stroke. Continue to keep Mike in your prayers.

New NCCS Program Assistant, Elizabeth Romero-Coca (left) and retired NCCS Program Assistant Nancy Watts (right)

The Scouts in the Pope Pius XII program I am facilitating are learning how knowing their talents and interests can help them to discern their response to their baptismal call. They are learning through their involvement in their Scout units how everyone has different talents and abilities and, by encouraging all to “do your best,” everyone benefits.

As a Catholic organization, the NCCS likewise consists of individuals seeking to live out their baptismal call. I count on the volunteers who comprise the Executive Board to share their skills and experiences in directing the NCCS in pursuit of its mission to promote the programs of the BSA within the Catholic Church. However, as volunteers we only have time to do so much. As our organization expanded its programming, we found we needed to employ someone with the skills and interest to perform many of the day-to-day activities.

Through gifts of generosity and foresight of past members, we have the financial resources to employ a full-time Program Assistant who can respond to your calls, letters and emails, among many other duties. BSA supports us by providing office space and back-office services at their HQ in Irving, Texas.

In December, our Program Assistant, Nancy Watts, retired after 5 years of service. We were blessed to have her as she was a self-starter, learning her duties without the benefit of having her predecessor available nor having many records or documents to reference. Nancy’s experience in conference planning was a benefit to our Conference Committee leadership, who were new in their roles at the time. We plan to recognize her service at our Biennial Conference. Nancy is working on a contract basis through April to help orient and mentor her replacement. She has also expressed interest in becoming a volunteer for the Conference committee.

Elizabeth Romero-Coca started her employment with us on February 17. She previously worked for the BSA in the Membership Impact department. She has experience managing an office, has earned a Bachelor’s degree in Information Systems and is working toward a Master’s degree in Accounting. Feel free to contact her, or me, to allow us to exercise our gifts in promoting Scouting as Catholic youth ministry!
Saint George Trek 2015
Registration Open

We are pleased to announce that registration for the 2015 Saint George Trek is now open. The dates for the next trek are July 8-23, 2015. We thank you for your patience as you awaited the release of this information. Registration documents can be found on our website nccs-bsa.org/ScoutUnits/StGeorgeTrek.php.

Through the generosity and commitment of NCCS, the registration fee has been lowered to $750 per participant. It is hoped that with the lower fee and extended registration period, diocesan committees will find it easier to raise the funds to cover the registration cost. It is necessary that diocesan committees make every effort to provide the cost of registration because participants are responsible for all costs associated with their personal gear and travel to Albuquerque. Financial sponsorship by the diocesan committee enhances the understanding that the participants are being sent to the trek on behalf of the diocesan committee. There is also a limited amount of scholarship funding available to diocesan committees. The scholarship application can also be found on the website.

Committees are asked to undergo a thorough application process in selecting a candidate for the trek. Standard requirements are as follows:

- Be a registered Boy Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturing Crew member, at least 15 years old by July 1, 2015, and have completed at least one year of high school
- Demonstrate maturity, physical ability, leadership potential, and an interest in the life of the Church
- Be open to the discernment of the vocations of priesthood and religious life
- Have the physical health and stamina to backpack the mountain trails of Philmont. (Must meet the BSA height/weight requirements for high adventure.)
- Have earned Scouting’s Ad Altare Dei or Pope Pius XII religious emblems and be involved in church, school and Scouting activities.

Committees may nominate one or two individuals. Previous participants are not eligible. Registrations are accepted based upon the meeting of the above requirements and a first come, first serve basis. After October 1, 2014, diocesan committees will be permitted to submit additional names. Upon the acceptance of a participant, committees are expected to assist in the preparation process of the participant. It is essential that diocesan committees assure that a participant is physically and mentally prepared for the trek and is properly outfitted with the necessary gear.

The Saint George Trek is staffed by advisors who hike with each crew. The advisors for the Saint George Trek are bishops, priests, religious men and women and seminarians. Recommendations for interested staff should be sent to Father Gerard Gentleman, the director of the Saint George Trek. Advisors will be expected to arrive in Albuquerque for staff training on July 7, 2015.

Further information on the trek can be found at the website. There will also be a workshop on the Saint George Trek offered at the NCCS Biennial Conference in Irvine, California, April 24-27, 2014. Any additional questions should be directed to:

Fr. Gerard Gentleman
Holy Family Church
17 Fordham Avenue
Hicksville, NY 11801
(516)-938-3846 ext. 307

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
BY FATHER MICHAEL P. HANIFIN

Recently, I received a letter from Chief Scout Executive Wayne Brock inviting me this summer to attend the Scouting in the Catholic Church Course at the Philmont Training Center outside Cimarron, New Mexico. The National Training Conference is held the week of August 3rd to 9th. This year Ed Martin, the NCCS National Chairman, is the Course Director and he has a wonderful faculty of experienced scouters who will team with him to produce a marvelous learning experience.

Philmont Training Center is at the steps of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains where the Rockies meet the Great Plains and is truly “God’s Country.” This is a wonderful time to bring your family because while you may be attending the conference there are activities and programs designed especially for their enjoyment.

Catholic Scouting programs need a greater number of trained Scouters who know how to wed the methods of the Boy Scouts of America to the teachings of the Catholic Church in order to grow the Scouting movement. Please take advantage of this marvelous opportunity. To register for the summer of 2014, go to www.MyScouting.org.

Looking forward to seeing you this summer at the PTC,

Father Michael P. Hanifin
NCCS National Chaplain
(2013-2016)
Membership 2013
By George Sparks
NCCS Chair-Elect

The Boy Scouts of America’s change in youth membership standards presents new opportunities for promoting the values of Scouting. We are greatly encouraged because the BSA leadership worked closely with chartered partners (including the Catholic Church) to craft a policy which is not in conflict with Catholic teaching. NCCS Chairman, Ed Martin; National Chaplain, Fr. Michael Hanifin; and our liaison with the USCCB, Bishop Robert Guglielmone worked diligently throughout the process.

As our chairman, Ed Martin, stated in his May 29th open letter to Catholic Scouters, “After … some prayer and discernment, I have come to the following conclusions:

• Scouting is still the best youth-serving program available to all youth
• We should be encouraged that the change in BSA’s youth membership standard is not in conflict with Catholic teaching
• We need to use this opportunity to show our commitment to making Catholic Scouting a safe environment for all youth in which the Catholic faith is taught, practiced and nurtured.”

With membership and unit counts trending downward (see charts below), now is the time to recommit ourselves to growing Catholic Scouting throughout the country. For the 2014-15 year, the Membership Committee will be rolling out a nationwide membership and new-unit initiative.

To assist diocesan committees to track their membership trends, the NCCS now provides each diocesan committee with quarterly membership reports. These reports list all Catholic-chartered units in the diocese, the chartered organization (parish, KofC council, Catholic school, etc.) and the number of registered youth and adults. These reports are distributed through the regional chairs.
National Youth Protection Symposium
by Susan Barriball
NCCS Vice Chair for Vocations, International, Training, Marketing and PR

Do you know who is sitting in your Scout or church meetings with you? Not all predators are caught through background checks because background checks are not all the same. Do you deal with a teen who is considered bad, unruly, and mean? Some of the negative behaviors displayed by youth can be a sign of sexual or other abuse. We worry about the strangers, coaches, youth leaders in our children’s lives but the Adverse Childhood Experience Research tells us 79.4% of children are abused by offenders in their homes. Welcome to the world that shakes the psyche of those who attend a conference with top leaders in the field of keeping children safe.

George Sparks, NCCS Chair Elect, and I attended the National Youth Protection Symposium October 14-15th, 2013 in Dallas, Texas. The program was frank and to the point. The videos we saw over the two-day event cannot be shared due to privacy between client and doctor. The videos, the presentations, the networking all proved to be difficult, but necessary, in helping our children stay safe in youth serving organizations (YSO).

There were 33 youth-serving organizations represented: national sports organizations, church organizations of other religions, organizations within dioceses and Scouting. The gathered group heard from nationally-renowned speakers and participated in breakout sessions. The symposium’s goal is to promote collaboration between youth serving organizations. The collaboration helps to get the message to the families and youth-serving organizations. Organizations need to provide safe environments for children and keep organizations healthy.

We as parents and youth organization leaders must continue to learn and recognize any abuse impacting our children. Please visit and view some of the presentations used at the symposium offered for gaining knowledge on the subject of abuse of children. The website can be found at: www.nationalyouthprotectionsymposium.org and visitors may click “Resources” on the main page to access materials from the 2012 and 2013 symposiums. This material is online for your review as a parent and as a leader in a youth serving organization.

Predators are online with 10-17 year old children. This age-group represents 20% of maltreated children last year. You need to know how juvenile-on-juvenile abuse occurs. The presentations offered at the site listed above will help you see how children fall prey to predators. The information on this site is intended for adults working to prevent child sexual abuse. Some of the content found is of a graphic nature. This content is not intended for, and should not be viewed, by minors.

I always thought I was prepared as a parent and a leader in the many organizations my four children joined. I took VIRTUS, BSA youth protection training, and programs required by other organizations. I was the parent who volunteered so I would be there to protect my children. The symposium taught me we all need in-depth (and yes intense) information to be prepared to protect our children. Please pass what you learn from the presentations to parents and grandparents in your life. More information is available at:
(http://www.scouting.org/Training/youthprotection.aspx and http://www.nationalyouthprotectionsymposium.org/)

Ad Altare Dei Update
Did you know? The Ad Altare Dei Religious Emblem is now available for anyone registered as a Boy Scout, Venturing Crew Member, or Sea Scout. This is a change that allows young ladies to earn the emblem.

The Ad Altare Manual is being rewritten to reflect the requirements of the Venturing and Sea Scout programs. The manual is scheduled to go to press this spring and become available in local Scout Shops late fall.

The Religious Emblems Committee is encouraging everyone to use the current manuals until the new ones becomes available in the Scout Shops and on line at www.scoutstuff.org. This is a great opportunity to help our young Scouts grow in their faith and learn more about the sacraments.

Eligibility and requirements are available on our website (nccs-bsa.org/emblems/AdAltareDei.php). Look for future updates on our website (nccs-bsa.org) and our Facebook page (facebook.com/nccs.bsa).
Did You Know…?
By Bob Oldowski

A Plan of Cooperation between the BSA and the Catholic Church was approved by the American bishops in November, 1934. As part of this Plan, the BSA agreed to provide a professional to serve as Executive Secretary (Executive Director) of the NCCS. This began in 1935. In 1992, the BSA reorganized and eliminated filling the position of Executive Secretary. This position has remained vacant.


BSA continued to relate to the NCCS through the Director of Relationships or comparable position, but this necessitated NCCS’ redefining its structure and establishing its first set of by-laws. These were finally approved at the 1998 biennial meeting and guide our organization today. Since 1992, the NCCS has had no Executive Secretary, but is led by a volunteer Scouter elected by NCCS members to serve as its chairman.

In the last issue of the Newsletter, we told you about the earliest troops under Catholic Church auspices and the growth of the relationship between BSA and the Catholic Church. We also discussed the development of the AAD emblem, which was Scouting’s first religious emblem.

As we continue to look at the growth and development of the NCCS, in preparation for our biennial meeting in Texas, we pick up with the introduction of the St. George emblem.

In 1954, the St. George emblem was approved for adults. At the same time, the laymen’s committee was expanded to include 10 outstanding laymen from six [BSA] regions.

In its first year of availability, 140 St. George emblems were presented to lay leaders throughout the nation.

In 1956, a committee of chaplains worked out the Parvuli Dei emblem for Cub Scouts. A total of 1,644 Parvuli Dei emblems were presented during the first year of the program’s operation.

In 1956, for the first time, the number of Scouting units under Catholic auspices passed the 10,000 mark. Also for the first time, the number of Ad Altare Dei emblems awarded passed the 10,000 mark, with 10,079 being awarded.

In 1960, at the 16th Biennial Conference in Milwaukee, the Scouter Development program was adopted. On May 31, the laymen’s committee was host at a reception and dinner in tribute to the hierarchy on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the plan of cooperation. Most Rev. Edigido Vagnozzi, STD, the Apostolic Delegate, was the guest of honor. Bronze plaques of appreciation were sent to the Ordinary in each of the 144 archdioceses and dioceses adopting the plan of cooperation.

Also in 1960, the Pope Pius XII emblem program for Explorers was adopted and launched. More than 50 Explorers qualified for the emblem in the first year. In 1962, the Pope Pius XII program was extended to Scouts of high school age.

In 1961, the Most Rev. William G. Connare, DD, Bishop of Greensburg, became the Episcopal moderator, succeeding Bishop Gerow.

In 1962, figures showed that more than 9,000 church parishes had more than 13,000 Scouting units. In 1964, for the first time, the number of Parvuli Dei emblems awarded surpassed the 10,000 mark.

Also in 1964, the national Catholic committee was restructured to include a chaplain and a lay representative from each diocese adopting the plan of cooperation. The Chaplains’ Bulletin was enlarged and changed to Scouting Bulletin of the Catholic Committee.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the plan of cooperation, golden AAD crosses with the respective coat of arms emblazoned in filigreed gold were presented to Bishops John P. Cody, William G. Connare, and J. Lennox Federal at special functions held in their honor. Bishop Bernard J. Shiel, founder of the CYO, was honored at the 30th anniversary luncheon.

In mid 1965, the first edition of the Scouter Development Handbook was offered, and by the end of the year more than 3,300 copies had been distributed. Training sessions were held during the fall at Washington, D.C., Indianapolis,
Kansas City, and Los Angeles.

At the 19th Biennial Conference at Atlanta in 1966, the Rev. Thomas Waterman of Kansas City was elected chairman of chaplains and 12 priests were appointed as [BSA] regional chaplains. During 1966, A. A. Kirk retired as director of Catholic Services, and was succeeded by William H. Condon. The next year, Ed Finney was appointed assistant director.

In 1968, the plan of cooperation was revised and updated. An executive board was provided for, to be made up of priests and laymen from each [BSA] region, to be elected from the dioceses. The plan was put into effect at the biennial conference, and under the revised plan, a layman was elected as national chairman. He was J. Bowling Wills of Allentown, Pa., and Father Waterman, the chairman of chaplains, became the national chaplain of the revised committee.

These officers began a 2-year term of office on January 1, 1969. Also at the 1968 Biennial Conference, the Pope Pius XII plaque was replaced by an ‘emblem’, and it was voted that the St. George emblem might be presented to non-Catholics, women, clergy and religious. As soon as this regulation was adopted, the committee voted as a whole to present the St. George emblem to Bishop Connare, who thus became the first clergyman to receive the emblem.

In June 1969, Josef P. Kessler became director of Catholic Services, succeeding William Condon, and also became executive secretary of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting.

At its 1970 Biennial Conference, the NCCS voted to include youth consultants as members, and the first two to serve were Stephen E. Littlejohn of Dover, Del., and George R. Cooper of Las Cruces, N. Mex.

In June of 1970, Bishop Connare retired as Episcopal moderator and was succeeded by the Most Rev. Michael F. McAuliffe, Bishop of Jefferson City. The committee officers were reelected for another term at the 1970 Biennial Conference: J. Bowling Wills, chairman; Thomas F. Hawkins, vice-chairman; and the Rev. Thomas Waterman, chaplain.

At the 1972 Biennial Conference in New Orleans, it was announced that a parish unit-recognition award would be authorized, to be underwritten by the Catholic Knights of St. George. Pope Paul VI agreed that the award might be named in his honor.

Officers elected for a 2-year term in New Orleans were: Thomas F. Hawkins, chairman; Ben M. Hauserman, vice-chairman; Very Rev. William Cornelison, national chaplain; Rev. Kenneth O’Connell, national associate chaplain. Since the Boy Scouts of America had reorganized its administrative structure into six regions, temporary regional chairmen and chaplains were appointed pending the election of new regional officers.

Also in 1972, the BSA opened Exploring to girls, and the first girl of record to earn a Pope Pius XII emblem was Jacqueline Louise Poedy of Monterey Park, Calif.

In the next Newsletter we will conclude our look at the past. We hope many of you will be making plans to join the NCCS in Houston, Tex., March 28-31, 1978 to plan the future of Scouting under Catholic Auspices.

--- end of 1977 article ---
Diocese of Orange Catholic Committee on Scouting Invites You to the 2014 Biennial

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us always!

On behalf of the Diocese of Orange Catholic Committee on Scouting, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to attend the NCCS 43rd biennial conference on April 24-27, 2014 here in the beautiful Irvine, California. The Conference provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, a chance to network with like-minded volunteers and friends as well as the opportunity to discuss the latest events and happenings of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting®.

Our diocesan conference committee team, led by Bernie Kilcoyne, has been working hard to make this conference a memorable one. Our NCCS Conference Committee has negotiated a low hotel rate during the week of the conference. This will enable you to turn this into a wonderful vacation.

The local committee has also arranged for two tours. On Monday, April 21, a special Disney tour has been arranged by our team member, and your tour guide, Hunter Piper. Wednesday afternoon will showcase the newly acquired Christ Cathedral and the Irvine Ranch Outdoor Education Center. The IROEC program is for the youth and non-conference adults at a discounted price where they can do archery, zip-line, and other wonderful outdoor activities.

I look forward to welcoming you to the NCCS 43rd biennial conference 2014 where you will be encouraged to learn, share, develop and reflect whilst also sampling the delights of the beautiful Orange County.

Yours in Catholic Scouting,
Roselito de los Reyes
Lay Chairman, Diocese of Orange Catholic Committee on Scouting.

Pope meets with ICCS Leaders
(continued from page 1)

I presented the Holy Father with a book on the life of Baden Powell and pointed out the paragraph of B-P’s meeting with Pope Pius XI in 1933. The Holy Father smiled and acknowledged the long relationship with the Church and Scouting.

The door then closed and the three of us found ourselves alone in the room with His Holiness. We were invited to sit down in the three white chairs across the desk from the Pope.

As he looked at me, I began with a crafted message that we each had prepared earlier that morning. We spoke about our relation with the Vatican through the Pontifical Council of the Laity, our relationship to Scouting through the World Organization of Scout Movement (WOSM), the 6 million Catholic Scouts we serve around the world through 65 National Scout Organizations that are ICCS members. We shared our story about the founding of International Catholic Scouting by Fr. Jacques Savin in 1913, the 100th Anniversary events and programs and spoke about Scouts who are on a frontier of their lives educationally, emotionally, and spiritually. Catholic Scouting provides the guidance and leadership to help them as they grow to become adults. We told him that we work to support him and his requests for the Church and the peoples of the world as we look to live our Catholic faith.

In closing, I asked the Holy Father for his message to Scouts as we look to our next 100 years. Pope Francis encouraged and urged Scouts to go ahead, and then to go again ahead. He observed that in order to go ahead it is necessary not to be stolen of our hope. Who can rob our hope, he asked? The worldliness, the temptations of the world, the consumerism, the research of easy pleasures, the hedonism, in other words all those things that try to persuade us that Heaven is here right now.