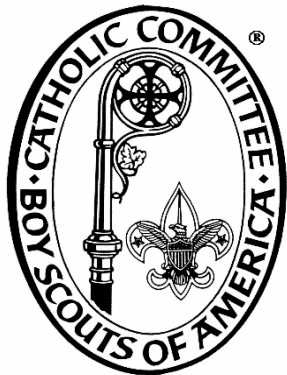


SCOUTING FORMS CHRISTIAN LEADERS

By Bishop Gerald A. Gettelfinger
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National Catholic Committee on Scouting®



The Boy Scouts of America needs little introduction. For over ninety years, Scouting in the United States alone has proven itself, again and again, to be an ideal program for both the Scouts and the adults who work with them. Scouting spans the years from boyhood to young adulthood to which boys and young men commit themselves voluntarily.

The National Catholic Committee on Scouting is the necessary link established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to work hand-in-hand with the Boy Scouts of America. To begin with, the Scout Oath and Law of the Boy Scouts of America embodies values and morals that are solidly Christian, indeed Catholic. Doing one's best; helping others at all times; paying attention to moral, mental and physical well-being; and striving to grow in virtue are all essential parts of Scouting.

In the Catholic Church, there is one particular aspect of Scouting that deserves special attention today. Scouting has tremendous potential for developing Christian leaders from among Catholic youth. It provides a powerful complement to the Church's ministry to Catholic youth. Scouting, under the tutelage of adult Catholic leaders, offers young people a unique opportunity to grow in faith and in leadership in the company of their peers.

In these our times many of our young men and women are struggling with an identity crisis. They sometimes find themselves uncertain and confused. Boys involved in the Scouting experience from boyhood to adulthood, and boys and girls in Venturing, have a real opportunity to come to know self in a safe and wholesome environment. They learn personal ideals that give clarity of purpose to their lives. They are able to attain skills that will benefit them for a lifetime.

Training, challenging, and supporting young men and women to develop responsibility, maturity, and leadership are constant elements of Boy Scouting and Venturing. At the same time, youth involved in Scouting are called on to be independent, to grow in self-reliance, and to learn to interact with others --- to experience interdependence.

Through the religious emblems program, Scouts have an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and to engage in regular service to their parish churches. Through the presence and activity of Scout chaplains, Scouts have an opportunity to develop lasting friendships with priests and religious outside the customary parish and school settings. Frequently called upon to lead religious services, to help out in parish or diocesan activities, to engage in programs directed toward justice and charity, Scouts

have an opportunity to experience and be a part of Church in ways that are both vital and personal to them.

I strongly recommend the highly developed, proven program of Scouting under Catholic leadership. Scouting provides adult role models as well as companionship for young people. The men and women involved in working with Scouts from the Tiger Cub to the Explorer level are an exemplary group of adults. I have seen outstanding Catholic lay leaders devote untold hours of their time and energy to Scouting because they believe that Scouting is vital in today's world. They see it as a unique opportunity for young people to grow in faith, life, and leadership. I share their vision and enthusiasm.

With all of its possibilities the Scouting program as used by Catholic leaders can assist young men and women in becoming outstanding members of their parish and school communities. Through interaction with fellow Scouts, through church-related activities, and through standing in awe of God's creation in natural outdoor surroundings, Scouts can experience in a powerful way the love of God and neighbor. They establish friendship with others. They learn of the interdependence required of one another when each other's life is at stake.

The Catholic Church is fortunate to have in the Scouting movement so apt a vehicle for Christian development. It can be noted that many church leaders today, clerical; religious; and lay, have come from the ranks of Scouting.

I encourage parents, priests, religious leaders, and teachers to support Scouting. If you have a pack, troop, or post in your parish, help in any way you can. If your parish or local church community does not have a Scouting program, please give it serious consideration. Scouting offers a rare opportunity for young people to develop as leaders, to appreciate God's creation, and to experience God's love in and through working with others. I believe in Scouting!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bishop Gerald A. Gettelfinger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Gerald A. Gettelfinger
Episcopal Liaison
National Catholic Committee on Scouting®