

Scouts Canada **Spiritual Emphasis & Religious Diversity**

Our Promise

When we were invested, we promised among other things, to do our duty to God. Putting into one of the principles of Scouting, our Founder B-P asked us to remember this important issue that Scouts have a duty toward their God, note that B-P did not specify the religion this God belongs to.

To explain “God” to Scout members who belong to religious institutions is not so difficult; it is more difficult to try it on Scouts who don’t have any religious affiliation; maybe it is worst if a Leader tries to explain this to an atheist.

I want to share one method explaining “God” to the difficult ones. I use the word “conscience” on one’s heart. To be a good Scout, would your “conscience” allow you to steal? To kill? To be cruel? And so on, so forth... In this way, one does not need to be a member of an earthly and organized religious affiliation, but if that person has a good “conscience”, he/she can be a Scout – according to Scouts’ principles.

To appreciate the love from this “God” – “Good Conscience”, Leaders may want to demonstrate to Scouts some down-to-earth examples of activities in our daily lives –

- our willingness to give alms to charity – material and/or talent
 - our care for nature and our appreciation of it
 - our sympathy for others who are in need
 - respects for others
- (and more.....)

Respects for others

We are also being asked in our Laws to be considerate. Among several meanings, being considerate also means we must respect and be sensitive to others for their difference – race, religion, culture, language, etc. if we want to be true Scouts. Respecting others will help increase our appreciation of diversity in our society. Leaders may want to use activities when we try to infuse our youth with this ideology. Following are some suggestions:-

- games
 - conduct neutral prayer
 - role play
 - Scouts’ Own
- (and more.....)

Scouts' Own

This is a gathering of Scout members to meditate and a time off to express our appreciation of creation, nature and brotherhood of Scouting by means of prayers, songs and activities. It can be informal in any shape and form and at anywhere and it may also be formal and be held at church, synagogue or open chapel of campsite. It cannot however, replace religious obligation, e.g. Sunday Mass of Catholic faith. Duration is usually 10 to 20 minutes depending on what is done and the size of attendance.

Informal Scouts' Own – sitting/standing around reflecting on a theme; at campfire circle, a river bank, a nice surrounding/scenery warranting a little time off from our regular activity, indoor, and/or anywhere and any time. Things to do are singing (preferably spiritual/religious songs), prayer(s) (neutral and/or otherwise), reading, or even music listening. It is advisable though, to link all the things to do in a Scouts' Own to a theme. Sometimes a simple Scout-Silence could also be observed at the start. Leaders and youth should be advised before hand if they are required to lead prayers and other activities in case they are chosen to do these in a Scouts' Own. Formal Scouts' Own – it is suggested to be carried out at pre-arranged setting, such as camp chapel or pre-arranged area. Indoor venues are used depending on the needs. Entrance to the area should be in formation. Formal Scouts' Own should be performed with planned activities with specific persons who have been told before hand what are to be done. Reciting Law & Promise, singing, prayers, Scouter's Five are usually on the agenda.

Religion-in-Life Award/ Spiritual Awareness Badge

Leaders should encourage youth to get involved with this badge. Syllabus and requirement for these are obtainable on the Scouts Canada's website; and our local Scout Office maybe able to help locating information helpful to obtain the badge (e.g. directing to contact person/group such as the Catholic Scout Guild for the Roman Catholic faith)