



THE BRIDGE

The Newsletter of The National Catholic Committee on Scouting

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Catholic Scouting can be a fun and strong way to support Catholic parents and educators in developing responsible, well-rounded children

by
Theresa Dirig
Chair, Religious Activities

Families are very busy today. It can be difficult to make a connection with parents, let alone foster collaboration on the home front in support of what children are learning at school.

Providing parents with a concrete way to connect with what a child is being taught in the class-



room – in the form of activities that are engaging and adaptable to children of varying ages – is a great way to help engage families in nurturing faith formation at home. The more than 50 Catholic Scouting Religious Activities from the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) are free resources that do just this.

My own experience as a religious education teacher at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Fort Wayne, Indiana illustrates the fact that many parents are searching for ways to help foster growth in the faith at home – they just need a place to start.

One December, I shared with students Catholic Scouting Religious Activities about Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin in advance of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I purchased patches from NCCS, so students could earn something tangible after they completed the associated Religious Activities. The students showed their parents the patches they earned, and I received numerous calls from parents who wanted to know more about Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin so their families could learn about them together. I sent home the teaching aid for those two Religious Activities to help parents learn about them and engage further with their children at home.

This take-home resource proved so popular with parents that I continued sending home one Religious Activity teaching aid each month with students, so families could engage in the activities at home and learn more about their faith together.

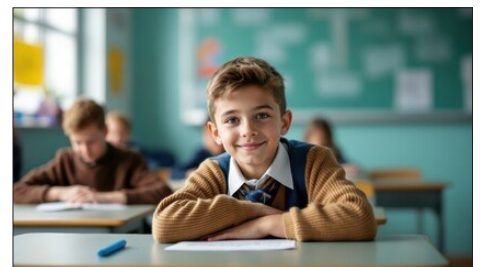
Sharing Religious Activities with families helped parents realize that they didn't have to navigate this area alone. Many young parents are overwhelmed with simply raising children and aren't equipped to assist in all areas of life. By sharing the teaching aids, they had more time to be with their families, with less time spent preparing a lesson. This

also gave me the opportunity to catechize the parents. We all need help at times navigating our faith life, and leaning on others helps all of us to grow. Knowing that there were other age-appropriate teaching aids available on the Catholic Scouting website helped these families' faith life grow. They began praying the Rosary at home and learned about other facets of their faith. I made lifelong friends with these families because I shared the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin,

Kendyl Santos, who teaches Grade 5 at Blessed Sacrament School in Belleville, Illinois also uses Catholic Scouting Religious Activities in her classroom. "I utilize Religious Activities during my religion period or when I have extra time in the day," said Santos. "The activities are interesting and help instill the ideals of the Catholic faith into our students."

Recently, Santos used Religious Activities from the American Saint Series, which focuses on holy men and women who have

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New Scholarships announced for 2026

By
Patrice Steenkolk

The NCCS Scholarship Committee is delighted to announce that, with the addition of two new scholarships, a total of \$40,000 will be awarded to outstanding Scouts in 2026.

St. Katharine Drexel Continuing Education Scholarship

A new \$2,000 scholarship has been established by Lt. Commander Laura Ray, Deb Sitz, Connie Kantor, Theresa Dirig, Kathy Polowski, and Susan Barriball. This scholarship is open to recent NCCS scholarship recipients who are currently enrolled in college—undergraduate or graduate—and actively involved in service to either their college or home parish, or diocese.

Savage Family Scholarship

Thanks to a generous contribution from John and Midge Savage, long-standing members of NCCS, a new \$2,000 scholarship will be available in 2026. John has served as chair of the Emblems Committee, while Midge has contributed to both the Training and Scholarship Committees. Their leadership in the Michigan Crossroads Council and the Archdiocese of Detroit Catholic Committee on Scouting reflects their deep commitment to service. Their love of learning has led them to establish this scholarship.

Please encourage any eligible Scouts you know to apply for these exciting opportunities. The application portal is now open for the 2026 scholarships. For eligibility details and to apply, visit: nccs-bsa.org/college-scholarships.



National Catholic Committee on Scouting



Dear Friends in Catholic Scouting,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude for all the support that you provide to the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) and to Catholic Scouting in general. Your dedication, prayers, and active engagement make our mission possible. Together, we continue to ensure that young people grow in both faith and character through the values of Scouting and

the teachings of the Church.

It is my great pleasure to report that the Catholic Church and its affiliates are now Scouting America's largest single chartering partner—both in terms of units chartered and total membership within those units. This milestone is a testament not only to the enduring relationship between the Church and Scouting but also to the commitment of parishes, schools, and diocesan leaders who recognize the power of Scouting as a form of youth ministry.

Our presence continues to be felt across both the Scouting and Catholic communities. NCCS volunteers proudly represented Catholic Scouting at Scouting America's National Annual Meeting and at the Catholic Church's Youth Protection Summit, where our witness to faith and integrity was warmly received. Our Chaplains—priests, deacons, and seminarians—served steadfastly at the Philmont Scout Ranch, ministering to Scouts and leaders alike, helping ensure that faith remains an integral part of the adventure.

The NCCS also played a significant role in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Listen, Teach, Send, workshops, contributing both financially and through the service of our volunteers in Indianapolis, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Philadelphia. These gatherings offered a powerful opportunity to highlight Catholic Scouting as a living model of accompaniment and discipleship in the Church today.

Looking ahead, our outreach continues to grow. The NCCS will participate in National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) events this November and provide program support to Catholic schools through NCEA media and educational initiatives. We are also preparing for robust participation in the NFCYM's National Catholic Youth Congress, where Catholic Scouts will join thousands of young people from across the nation in celebrating faith and service.

Internationally, we are honored to be a critical partner in the International Catholic Conference of Scouting's (ICCS) three-year "Leaven in the Dough" initiative. This important project will strengthen ICCS's efforts to ensure faith remains a vital pillar of Scouting throughout the world.

As I reflect on all these efforts, I remain deeply optimistic about the future of Catholic Scouting in the United States. Our programs, our partnerships, and—most importantly—our people continue to demonstrate that Catholic Scouting is a vibrant, faith-filled ministry that forms young disciples and strengthens the Church's mission.

Thank you again for your continued support of the NCCS and of Catholic Scouting. Together, we are building the next generation of faithful leaders—grounded in Christ, inspired by the Spirit, and guided by the values of Scouting.

In Catholic Scouting

William Guglielmi



The Chaplain's Corner Father Mark Carr, S.J. National Chaplain



One of my favorite phrases from Scouting's ideals comes from the first line of the Scout Oath: "I will do my best." It is far from being a throw-away line that introduces the commitments contained in the Oath, first among which is *duty to God*. The mindset, stance, and approach to life of doing one's best captures what it means to be a true Scout and a real disciple of Christ. We strive to do our best.

God doesn't expect more of us than our best. Nor can we expect more of others than their best. We might not always feel at our best because we're tired, worn out, wounded, or stretched in many directions. Our best, what we're capable of, fluctuates. The path to doing our best, to bettering ourselves, and growing closer to God, is often paved with mistakes, learning, and second tries before we get it right. Those who we call Saints are people who never stopped trying to do their best. Don't be afraid to do your best. And, as John Paul II said, "Don't be afraid to be a Saint."

I ask that we all commit ourselves to doing our best for Catholic Scouting. That might mean organizing and planning a regional or diocesan event, facilitating a religious emblem, attending a committee meeting, offering a reminder to Scouts to say grace before a meal, being present as a second adult at a Scout event, providing transportation for an outing, or praying that the ministry of Catholic Scouting bears much fruit. What is the best that you can offer God and others?

Thank you for your commitment to Catholic Scouting! Whether we are accompanying Scouts in their local units, serving with a diocesan committee, or helping the NCCS on a regional or national level, Scouting always reminds us to *do our best*.

NCCS looking for priests and other religious personnel to help better serve Spiritual formation of Catholic youth in Scouting

The work of the National Catholic Committee requires hundreds, if not thousands, of dedicated volunteers at all levels to ensure the mission of "utilizing and ensuring the constructive use of the program of the Scouting America as a viable form of youth ministry with Catholic youth." This includes priests, seminarians, deacons, religious order members, and lay people from across the country. All are important links to this valuable program, but the priests, deacons, religious order members are always critical members of this community as the services they offer can not always be filled with lay personnel. To that extent the Chaplain Committee has designed a form to solicit interest in summer 2026 chaplaincy opportunities. Contact the National office at info@nccs-bsa.org to obtain a copy.



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To submit items for future editions of *The Bridge* please contact Mike Gannon at scouttrain@aol.com. Photos are acceptable and should be in a jpeg format. Please ensure all people in photos are identified and the subject matter is fully described.

International Catholic Awareness program links Church and Scouting around the world

By Phil Krajec

The International Series offers a variety of enrichment opportunities for young people at various grade levels as well as for adults. Taking part in such activities help Scouts and Scouters understand their connection to the Universal Church and fellow Catholic Scouts worldwide.

The **International Catholic Awareness** program links the Catholic Church and the Scouting movement all over the world. The purpose is to help the youths understand more about Scouting and Catholicism in other countries and how they may differ from what they experience in the United States. Those who complete the activity may purchase patches, pins and medals in recognition for their accomplishment. Royalties from the sale of the items help further the work of the International Catholic Conference of Scouting (ICCS).



The **Laudato Sí** activity is based on the 2015 Encyclical of Pope Francis on Care For Our Common Home. Scouts learn that how we treat our common home reflects how we care for each other.

Scouts can also learn about **Venerable Jacques Sevin** who is considered the Father of Catholic Scouting. Fr. Sevin saw the benefits of Scouting and started the first Catholic unit in France in 1918. Participants discover how all Catholic Scouts are united because of Fr. Sevin's vision.



In addition to religious activities, nominated honors are available to acknowledge those who have made significant contributions to the promotion of International Catholic Scouting. The Executive Board approved the **Totus Tuus Award** at last spring's NCCS Membership Assembly. A Latin phrase meaning "totally yours," Totus Tuus was the motto of Saint Pope John Paul II. Nominations may be made by any NCCS member in good standing. Nominees must have served at the national and international Catholic level for a substantial time as an active member of the NCCS or ICCS.

The inaugural awards will be presented at next spring's Catholic Scouting Summit in Wichita.



More information on these activities and honors can be found on the NCCS website under the Emblems & Activities and Awards & Recognition tabs.

Savannah and Charleston Dioceses sponsor Bishop England Trek

On Sunday, July 13, 2025, seven Catholic Scouts met at Knox Scout Reservation, on the South Carolina-Georgia border to begin the **2025 Bishop England Trek**. First held in 2015 the Bishop England Trek has become a biennial event sponsored jointly by the Catholic Committees on Scouting for the Diocese of Charleston and for the Diocese of Savannah. The Bishop England Trek is an opportunity for young Catholic men and women, who are ages 14 and older, who are involved in Scouting America's Scouts BSA and/or Venturing Programs. These youth meet, make friends, have fun and experience adventures that are linked together through prayer and worship. Each Bishop England Trek has featured a different theme with the purpose of engaging the Scouts in prayerful discussions and opportunities for personal discernment about what God's call for them means.

This year's trek "**Sailing For Vocations**" was a sailing adventure on Lake Thurmond. While sailing and camping, the Scouts experienced a program designed to encourage the integration of morality, values, spirituality, faith, scripture and vocation in their lives as young Catholic men and women. They were accompanied by a Priest and a Deacon on the trek who led them in prayers, discussions and daily celebration of the Mass. This year, Father Matthew Gray of the Diocese of Charleston and Deacon Dan Gillan of the Diocese of Savannah accompanied the Scouts on the Trek.

At the conclusion of the trek on Friday, July 18, 2025 there was a Mass and a luncheon at Knox Scout Reservation where the Scout participants were challenged to continue their journey of discernment with Our Lord and if they chose, they were invited to apply to attend the **St. George Trek** at Philmont Scout Ranch in July, 2026. Participants were also encouraged to use the leadership skills gained on the Bishop England Trek to become role models for their fellow Scouts. The next Bishop England Trek will be in 2027.



Catholic Scouting as an aid to education (continued from page 1)

had a big impact on the Catholic American landscape. The Religious Activity about St. Kateri Tekakwitha was especially impactful for students, who identified her as their class's "adopted saint" for the school year.

"I also used Religious Activities in the Rosary Series, which help students learn the mysteries of the Rosary and how to pray the Rosary," said Santos. "All of the Religious Activities are very useful resources for teachers, and they are free and easily accessible."

There are currently seven Religious Activity Series available, as well as a special Eucharistic Revival Activity in support of the National Eucharistic Revival and another series, Religious Trail, being developed now. The Rosary Series has five activities that teach young people about the Rosary. The Marian Series has five activities that examine Marian Feasts commemorated in the United States.

The American Saint Series provides an opportunity for Scouts to learn about great men and women who influence American Catholics.

The Modern Saint Series offers Scouts examples of 20th and 21st century men and women who made an impact on Catholics around the world. The Faith Series provides Scouts an opportunity to learn about key elements of Catholic tradition and teaching. The International Series offers activities designed to help Scouts understand their connection to the Universal Church and fellow Catholic Scouts in the global community, as well as understand our shared responsibility to care for the Earth. There is also a Heritage Series that includes long-standing Religious Activities to which some groups share a special devotion.

Catholic school educators planning for the new school year may want to incorporate Catholic Scouting Religious Activities into their lesson plans as a free resource that provide real-life examples of ways to engage with each lesson. Each Religious Activity features a downloadable teaching aid with learning opportunities, hands-on exercises and links to additional related resources, with different options for various age

levels of students. As an example, here is the downloadable teaching aid for Blessed Carlo Acutis, a teen who was canonized as the first millennial saint in September.

Teachers are also invited to order. Religious Activity patches for students who complete an activity. A person doesn't need to be a Scout to earn a Religious Activity patch and kids often enjoy having a tangible way to show what they've accomplished. Download this handy overview of all the Religious Activities along with images of their patches.

While a person doesn't need to be a Scout to use Catholic Scouting resources, it's good to know that Catholic Scouting is a time-honored—and fun—way to support Catholic educators' and parents' efforts to raise children to become responsible, well-rounded adults. Catholic Scouting helps kids grow up to be good citizens and faithful Catholics.

Editors note: Theresa Dirig is chair of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting Religious Activities

St. George Trek deadline set for December 31, 2025— Scouts urged to apply now

St. George is the patron saint of Catholic Scouting and the inspiration for Catholic Scouting's high adventure leadership program and vocation retreat for Scouts who are 15 to 18 years old. Every two years, approximately 70 Scouts from dioceses and eparchies across the country are selected for this 11-day challenge known as the St. George Trek, which will take place **July 1-16, 2026 at the Philmont Scout Ranch**.

Led by selected priests, seminarian and religious advisors from around the country, St. George Trek participants experience spirituality, faith, scripture and the sacraments in a spectacular setting. During the Trek, Scouts make two commitments: to the ongoing discernment of their vocation and to engagement in their home parish and diocese.

Each Diocesan/Eparchial Catholic Committee on Scouting is invited to encourage one or two Scouts from their diocese or eparchy to apply to participate in the Trek. Participants are accepted on a first come, first served basis. A female crew is planned pending sufficient female registration. There would need to be at least six female Scouts committed for the Trek to form an all-female crew. This trek is not co-ed.

All the information needed for Scouts to register is at [St. George Trek - NCCS-BSA](#) and the approved application must be submitted to NCCS by December 31, 2025. If you have questions about the St. George Trek please contact Fr. Mike Santangelo at (732) 438-0220 or at stgeorgetrek@gmail.com



Dear Friends and Supporters of Catholic Scouting:

This past year has been a testament to what happens when faith and service come together in the lives of young people. Thanks to your prayers and generosity, Catholic Scouting has touched thousands of lives—helping youth grow in confidence, deepen their relationship with Christ, and discover the joy of serving others – for this is our mission! At the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS), we believe something simple yet powerful: “Scouting is ministry with youth”. Every retreat, service project, campfire, and religious emblem program is more than an activity—it is an encounter with God. Through various focused religious emblems – Light of Christ and Parvuli Dei (Cub Scouts), Ad Altare Dei and Pope Pius XII Award (Scouts BSA), and the Light is Life (Eastern Rite Catholic Scouts) - Catholic Scouts are being formed into servant leaders rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From the countless counseling moments with youth and young adults at Philmont Scout Ranch to the Eucharistic celebrations at the National Jamborees at the Summit – Christ is made present. In 2025, we awarded thirteen scholarships to faith-filled young men and women who choose Scouting as a path to live out their values and serve others. These remarkable individuals prioritize their spiritual growth and leadership development - often amidst many competing demands. By supporting their education, we invest not only in their future but in the future of our Church and society.

But this mission cannot continue without you!

The need is urgent. Across the country, more Catholic youth and young adults are seeking opportunities to grow in faith, dioceses and parishes are asking for stronger support. With your help, we can rise to meet that call.

Your gift today will:

- Equip Scout leaders and chaplains with faith-based training.
- Strengthen diocesan and regional Scouting initiatives.
- Expand resources for Catholic religious emblems and awards.
- Reach underserved Catholic youth and parishes.
- Sustain national programs that unite faith and Scouting.

When you give, you are not just supporting a program—you are shaping disciples who will carry Christ’s light into their families, their parishes, and the world.. Please join us once again in this vital mission. Please prayerfully consider making a gift to the NCCS today. Together, we can ensure that Catholic Scouting continues to thrive as a Christ-centered ministry, forming young people who are ready to lead with faith and courage in a world that needs them now more than ever.

With gratitude and prayers for you and your loved ones.

Yours in Christ and Scouting,

Bill Guglielmi
National Chairman

Rev. Mark Carr, S.J.
National Chaplain



Did You Know...?

By Bob Oldowski
(NCCS Historian)

NCCS recently had another Advisory Board (AB) meeting on a Zoom conference call, conducted by the new Chair, John Anthony. Questions arose what the role of this board is. Here’s some history on this.

The NCCS AB Board was established with 47 members at the 2000 annual meeting in Richmond, Virginia when a new administration came to office. We were surprised that our Executive Board (EB) had grown to over 100 members--too large to host effectively and there was no guide for keeping it trim. A proposal was made and passed to make things more efficient by offering prior EB members and other leaders to become part of a new Advisory Board instead, whose purpose would be to encourage constructive analysis, and to discuss and propose improvements to the NCCS.

Like other NCCS committees, the AB leadership was appointed by the national chair and advisor, and this usually resulted in selection of previous national chairs and chaplains. The AB would meet once at the annual meeting. Zoom enables more frequent sessions. Procedures for being invited to the AB have varied and are currently being reviewed.

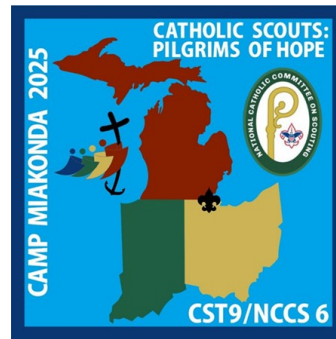
Region Six Scouts complete Journey of Hope activity at Camporee

On the weekend of October 17, 18, and 19, 2025, Region 6 of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) hosted for Council Service Territory 9 a Catholic Scout camp-o-ree and retreat at Camp Miakonda. This was the first of its kind. Nearly 160 campers enjoyed a beautiful day with Catholic and Scouting programs. The participants were from ten Scouting America councils:

Anthony Wayne Area Council
Black Swamp Area Council
Dan Beard Council
Erie Shores Council
Great Trails Council
Hoosier Trails Council
Lake Erie Council
Miami Valley Council
Michigan Crossroads Council
Tecumseh Council

They represented the following dioceses:

Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
Archdiocese of Detroit
Diocese of Kalamazoo
Diocese of Lansing
Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Diocese of Cleveland
Diocese of Toledo
Diocese of Youngstown



The Scouts completed the Jubilee of Hope activity from NCCS, participated in archery, practiced first aid and scoutcraft skills, created a rosary, and learned about ham radios as part of Erie Shores Council's Jamboree-on-the-Air program. Scouts and leaders prayed together at Mass for Sunday and the Liturgy of the Hours throughout the weekend. They also heard a brother, a sister, a priest, and a married couple share their vocation stories.

Leaders raved about the program. Conrado Campos, a Scout leader of Troop 325 in Battle Creek, Michigan, said, "Thank you for putting this Catholic campout together. It was well done. Our troop enjoyed it very much. It was tailored for all ages." Andy Goshe, a Scout leader of Troop 319 in Findlay, Ohio, said, "The event will leave a lasting impact for all involved as we all progress our faith journey."

NCCS Region 6 gives thanks to God for the glorious weather for the weekend, Erie Shores Council for hosting the event, the many donors who helped defray costs, the staff who planned and worked the weekend, and the Scouts and leaders who decided to attend this event when they had other choices.

For more information about this event, email Bro. Andrew J. Kosmowski, SM, NCCS Region 6 chaplain at kosmowskia1@udayton.edu.



On the Pilgrimage of Hope



Refining compass skills