



UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

European Scouts - Rover Pilgrimage to Vézelay
Homily of the Mass, on October 31st 2016
Monday of the XXXIth week in Ordinary Time of the liturgical year

First of all, let me greet respectfully and affectionately Mgr. Hervé GIRAUD, your bishop, who gives me the joy to take part in this great pilgrimage and who allows me to preside this Eucharist. I would like to thank him and his clergy for this act of communion. I will celebrate this Eucharist for the Rover Scouts of Europe and their families, as well as for Mgr. Hervé GIRAUD, for his clergy and his diocese.

*“A Rover Scout who has not given everything has given nothing.
A Rover Scout who is not able to die is able to do nothing.
But remember that it is sometimes more difficult to live.
And now, brother, go with God!”*

Dear Pilots and Rovers of European Scouts, my friends,

In these words, both splendid and demanding – and splendid *because they are* demanding – you have recognised an extract from the ceremonial of the Rover Departure. After hearing them, the new Scout Rover kneels down in front of the priest in order to receive God's blessing, then he moves away, alone, in the dark, “*accompanied by the saints*”, while his scout brothers move sideways to let him walk between them, at the light of the torches, and sing the song “L'Appel de la Route” ...

Let us wonder: does the new Rover who disappears in the forest walk at random, towards an unknown destination? The answer is no. Dear scout friends, you find this answer inscribed in the stones of this basilica as well as in your core texts, those of Catholic scouting that the Jesuit Father Jacques Sevin redacted while he contemplated the Cross of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, whom he called “*the Outstanding Chief*”. Indeed, these words of your ceremonial resound this morning within this beautiful House of God, a splendid jewel of medieval *Christianity*: here, in Vézelay, on Easter day 1146, Saint Bernard evoked the profaned Edessa and the threatened Holy Sepulchre, in Jerusalem; he invited the knights who wanted to put on the Cross of Christ to humility, obedience and sacrifice. And for you, Scouts of Europe, Christianity does not belong to a bygone past; as a matter of fact, the third principle of your movement affirms (I quote it): “*As a son of Christendom, the scout is proud of his faith: he works to establish Christ's kingdom in all his life and in the world around.*”

Dear scout friends: these words of your ceremonial evoke other words that, long ago, king Saint Louis himself, when he was young, pronounced for his knight oath. It was in mid-November 1226, in Soissons, on his way to Reims where he was going to be sacred king of France. Like you, Saint Louis liked to come to Vézelay in pilgrimage, and the last time was in 1270, the year of his death. At the beginning of the anointment ceremony, Saint



UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

Louis had heard these words pronounced by the bishop: *“If you look for riches or honours, you are not worthy of being anointed as a knight”*. After bowing down in front of the *baussant*, this standard which is still yours, with the eight-point Cross representing the eight Beatitudes, Louis IX had then promised to protect the holy Church and to believe in all its teachings, to defend the weak, especially widows and orphans, to be courteous and respectful towards women (by the way, I remind you the 5th article of the scout law : *“the scout is courteous and chivalrous”*) ; he had also promised to be frank and to fight evil and injustice. In other words, for the knight of medieval Christianity, it meant to conform his life to these three words that you know very well: *“frankness, selflessness, purity”* which are the three main “virtues” of scouting. And you know that they constitute the summary of the scout law in ten articles that Father Sevin left to you as his spiritual testament. So, you are called to be always true, courageous and full of dedication for your country and for the Church, up to the total gift of your life. Be happy and proud of the purity and virginity of your heart and of your body, in the middle of a selfish society obsessed by sex.

Yes, my dear Rovers, you must be conscious of the legacy transmitted by your leaders, because the life of a scout, your life, is woven by these references, these virtues that irrigate your souls of baptised people. And if this morning it is easier than usual for you to pray in this beautiful stone vessel, it is also because these virtues of courage, loyalty, fidelity, self-dedication to martyrdom, are reflected in the stones of this basilica, especially in the sculpture of Christ in majesty that you can admire in the tympanum of the narthex. As saint Peter affirms it, this morning, in this basilica, the stones of which are in a way the secular witnesses of all those who, before you, have testified of their faith, you, European Scout Rovers, you are the *“living stones”* who enter into the construction of the spiritual house called *“the Church”* (see 1 P 2,5). Yes, if the stones of this sacred building could speak, no doubt that they would sing the glory of God and of the Marriage of the Lamb, already present in this world through our liturgy, the one of the Church, with Gregorian song, which is its nicest jewel. Hasn't Christ himself said to the unbelievers and the faint of heart of his time, who wanted his apostles to keep silent because they were too impetuous according to them: *“I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!”* (Lk 19, 40)? Everyone knows that since the foundation of European Scouting in 1956 – exactly 60 years ago -, and even recently, some people have tried to make the Guides and Scouts of Europe keep silent in many ways, more or less insidiously, asking them among others to edulcorate some expressions of their core texts, because they were considered as no more adapted to the so called “modern” world. But, at the height of the storm, when a big agitation was hitting many parish and religious communities, your predecessors, true *“living stones”* of the Holy Church, - national, province and district commissioners, leaders, religious advisers, many of them being already back in the Father's home – your predecessors have firmly kept their line in the trial, humbly and in prayer, exactly like the stones of this basilica Saint-Magdalena, that goes on defying the centuries by giving a silent testimony to Christianity, away from our agitated world, on the *“eternal hill”* of Vézelay.



**UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN**

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

My dear European Scout Rovers, you are the heirs of this humble and firm fidelity of your predecessors. Don't let yourselves be influenced by a Europe which is drunk of its numerous ideologies doing a lot of harm to the whole mankind. Think of Marxism and its gulags, of Nazism and its horrors, and now the gender theory attacking directly the laws of God and of nature, destroying marriage and our societies, damaging our children right from their school age. I repeat it: the gender ideology, the disproportionate and unlimited democratic freedoms, and the ISIS have all the same satanic origin. You, European Scout Rovers, if you resist to this Europe without God, proudly dominating over the poor and the weak, and denying its Christian roots, you will prevent it from committing suicide and from disappearing, eliminated by more virile peoples, more believing and prouder of their identity and of their relation to God. You are the present and the future of Europe and of the Church. You have energy and faith, and your attachment to Jesus Christ will enable you to build again the Christian legacy and the European society.

In the first reading of this Mass, the apostle saint Paul reveals to you the secret of joy that must animate your Pilot Teams and your Rover Crews: he encourages you to comfort yourselves mutually in the trials, to look for unity, and above all to practice the humility described by the Apostle of the nations as follows: *“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves”*. Isn't it what we also read in the ceremonial of the Rover Departure: *“The Scout Rover looks for truth in everything humble-heartedly and serves freely recovered values without crushing the others under the weight of his discoveries”*? Yes, as we have just sung in the Psalm of today: the Rover's *“heart is not lifted up; his eyes are not raised too high; he does not occupy himself with things too great and too marvellous for him.”* This humility is that of Guy de Larigaudie, the one you call *“the legendary Rover”* dead for France on May 11th 1940 who said: *“it is as beautiful to peel potatoes for the love of God than to build cathedrals”*.

However, humility is the fruit of a spiritual fight that you cannot lead on your own. This is why the pedagogy of the Road offers you two ways enabling you to realise the unity of your life and so to grow in holiness: some witnesses, who are the rover godfather and the spiritual adviser, and the Moment of Prayer.

First of all, beside you, you have your rover godfather and your spiritual adviser. Your life is like a mountain that you have to climb. In this ascension, the rover godfather, who is necessarily a rover scout, is the leader of climbing. As a matter of fact, he precedes you, as any scout leader must do it, and he cuts steps in the icy slope of your existence, by hitting precisely the ice with his axe in order to open a way, the one that leads you to unity of life on earth, in the perspective of the great Departure towards Heaven. Yes, accept to consider that the Chief, who precedes you on the way of life, sees further than you do. And you also have your spiritual adviser beside you: a priest who gives you these words of Jesus: *“My grace is sufficient for you”*, so that you may avoid to fall into the trap of



UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

voluntarism. In his daily personal prayer, father Sevin used to see one hand put on the shoulder of the scout, “*a firm and precise hand*”, as he said, “*the infallible hand of the One who is the only one to say ‘I am the Road’, Our Lord Jesus Christ*”. You are called to discover this presence of Jesus in the heart of your Moment of Prayer, that you must practice every day, thus imitating the Benedictine monks who leave their hard work (*labora*) only to dive into praising and adoring prayer (*ora*). Isn't saint Benedict, protector of Christian Europe, also your protector? The Moment of Prayer is a daily silent retreat, a search of living God present in you. If you practice the Moment of Prayer perseveringly, then you will hear in your heart these words that echoed in father Sevin's soul: Jesus, “*the Outstanding Chief*” will tell you: “*lift up your eyes, my son, stop for a while... Stretch your arm, my son, to know the way; I am the Scout Master, and my divine Presence is always beside you, whatever may happen*” (see *Le scoutisme*, 1930).

Today, the Gospel calls us to give ourselves totally, without going backward. The lever of it is the daily “Good Turn” (the famous GT). To invite and to serve the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, means “*to be a friend to all*” as the 4th article of the law says; in other words, the ceremonial of the Rover Departure also affirms the same: it means “*to accept beforehand the gift of oneself to anyone, knowing that the Scout Rover does not belong to himself but to the others*”. Father Paul Doncoeur, a Jesuit who is considered as the second founder of the Road after father Sevin, also said: “*When we take off our uniform, a certain style must remain, a certain way of living, poor, simple and smiling, a taste for the open air and for effort, courteousness, and above all the sense of service*”... going to the total gift, because the 3rd article of your law affirms that “*The scout's duty is to help and save others*”. Yes, in the Gospel of today, Jesus asks you to invite at the table of your life all those you meet, not only your friends, nor “rich neighbours”. Isn't what Pope Francis told you in Cracow last summer, during the vigil of the WYD? “*Young man*”, he said, “*leave the sofa that promises you hours of comfort so you can escape to the world of videogames and in front of a computer... Without even realizing it, you start to nod off, while others – perhaps more alert than we are, but not necessarily better – decide your future for you... The times we live in do not call for young ‘couch potatoes’, but for young people with shoes, or better, boots laced... We were not born to sit on a bench but to leave our mark.*”

My dear Rover friends, these laced boots are the ones you wear on the Road to Santiago every summer... On the Road, you learn to open your heart; this is symbolised by the Y-shaped stick, given to the new Scout Rover with these beautiful words: “*Take this Y-shaped stick, symbol of fidelity to the soil of your ancestors and of your open heart, which are the signs of a European Rover Scout.*” And a little earlier, the chief had said: “*Have you thought that life does not stop at border lines? Are you ready to cover the distance between yourself and the others in order to meet them?*”

The aim of the Road is to achieve what you call your “*unity of life*”: the point is to find a coherence between your deep and legitimate desires and the will of God upon your life.



**UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN**

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

Let us speak of coherence. I just take an example: I am a Scout of Europe, I have pronounced my promise. If I have attended a party from Saturday evening to Sunday morning and if I have not attended the Sunday Mass, I can say that I have put Christ out of my life. Yes, are my acts coherent with the scout law? This spiritual survey can be done with your Rover godfather and with your religious adviser, and you know that there is a sacrament to reconcile you with God and with your brothers; it is the one we celebrated last night: the sacrament of Penance, or of confession. About Mass, and so about the Eucharistic Communion, may you say like Guy de Larigaudie: *“On the Road of my life, the daily communion has been for me, every morning, the bath of living water that strengthens and relaxes all the muscles, the substantial meal before the walk, the look of tenderness that gives courage and trust”*.

This human and spiritual maturation gradually leads you to the discernment of your vocation, whatever it may be. There is the vocation of Christian marriage: are you ready to enter into the beautiful adventure of the sacrament of marriage in a society, in Western countries, that edicts laws aiming at changing the nature of the family, up to the murder of the embryo – who is, right from its conception, a human being (this must be always reminded) and who has an imprescriptible right to life? About this point, I would like to remind you what Pope saint John Paul II said to the communist leaders of his country during his first apostolic journey to Poland, in 1979: *“To exclude Christ from the history of man is an act against man”*. This was in Warsaw. And three days later, he added in Czestochowa: *“Nations must build themselves upon the law of God, otherwise they perish”*. The Western world is threatened of certain death if, through the gender ideology, it goes on with its diabolic program of deconstruction and demolition of marriage and of family, as they are wanted by God. Only the union between a man and a woman may constitute a marriage and a family. Any other type of union is a farce that humiliates and dishonours our mankind, ennobled and destined to be divinised by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As saint Ireneus of Lyon said: *“God became man so that man may become God”*. Yes, to demolish marriage and family is a crime against humanity and an insult to God! So, Rover Scout, are you ready, through your testimony of Christian future husband and father to take part in the defence and promotion of family and life? Yet, you must never forget that in order to do that, as the ceremonial of the Rover Departure says, you must become *“neither a prisoner of your caprices, of trends, nor of the errors of society”* and that *“life has to be taken seriously and that all your acts count and involve?”*!

A Rover Scout can also be called by God to the “highest service”, in priesthood or religious life. I know that your movement has given to the Church many diocesan priests, missionaries, religious people belonging to various congregations, and monks. How many



UNION INTERNATIONALE DES GUIDES ET SCOUTS D'EUROPE
FEDERATION DU SCOUTISME EUROPEEN

*Dotée du statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Reconnue par le Conseil Pontifical pour les Laïcs comme association privée internationale de fidèles de droit pontifical*

seminarians and priests may testify that their vocation matured in this beautiful school of scouting, which diverts you from selfishness and laziness! When a scout pronounces his promise, when he takes his Rover Departure, he affirms that he sets Christ in the heart of his life, and the camp or the Road are a kind of “retreat in the open air” where he can hear the call to consecrate himself to the Lord. So, develop in yourselves prayer, that is to say meditation and adoration for, as I have written in the book *Dieu ou rien* : “*I think that men, like trees, need roots to feed themselves in the best soil, which is simply the millenarian inheritance and tradition of Christianity. The truth of opinions in a society overflowed by information should not make us forget the multi-secular tradition of the Church. The best way of understanding and transmitting is interior life in God!*”, an intense life of prayer (p. 164).

I conclude this homily with this simple word that I leave to you and that you can remember easily: it is about the red colour. You are in the “*red branch*” of scouting and I am, in a way, in the “*red branch*” of the Church, you as Rovers and me as a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church! You know perfectly well that this red colour is the Blood of Christ and of the martyrs, evoked by the ceremonial of the Rover Departure as follows: “*Receive the red colour, symbol of Rovers and of love and blood, in order that you should spare neither love nor blood during your life.*” When Pope Benedict XVI gave me the beanie of Cardinal in 2010, he told me in his homily: “*Your ministry is difficult, for it is not in conformity with the way of thinking of men... The red colour of your habit evokes blood, symbol of life and love. The Blood of Christ that, according to an ancient iconography, Mary gathers from the pierced side of her Son dead on the Cross*”. This is why, whereas until now I have called you “*scout friends*”, I now allow myself to tell you: “*scout brothers*”. I entrust you to Our Lady of the Road, called by Saint Bernard the Star “*who shines in Heaven, irradiates in hell, illuminates the world, warms up the souls and inflames the virtues*”. She is the one who will lead you towards the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord. At the end of your life, may you apply to yourselves these words of Guy de Larigaudie, who wrote to his sister, on the eve of his death in the line of duty: “*I have always had, deep in myself, the nostalgia of Heaven, even more now that I know better the beauties of the world. Heaven will be the fulfilment of all these beauties; life leads us to it along a path the length of which we do not know. But why should I be sad to walk on this path since Light is at the end?*”

May God bless you and go on accompanying you on this beautiful road of European Rovers Scouts.

AMEN

Robert Cardinal Sarah

Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments