

Archdiocesan Scouting Mass

Introduction

Msgr. Phillips, Msgr. Jarboe, Father Kiesel, Fr. Timoney, Deacons George & Philip, dear friends in Christ: It is a joy for me to be with all of you here today for the annual Archdiocesan Scout Mass and Presentation of Awards. I want to thank Fr. Arnold, who cannot be with us today, for his hospitality.

I am grateful as well to the Archdiocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting and I offer my warmest congratulations to all of you, our young people, who will be receiving special awards today. Your achievements in Scouting make us all very proud. I admire the formation you are receiving in faith, values, preparedness, & patriotism, and take this occasion to express my warm support for the Catholic scouting program.

Cliffs Notes on the Good News

The annual Scouting Mass takes place, a bit later than usual this year, on the Sunday when we celebrate the Lord's Ascension into heaven. And so we might ask, what exactly is the Ascension? It's not a word we ordinarily use - it's reserved for a very special event in Jesus' life.

This is what we know. God loved the world he made and all of us who live in it. In fact, he loved us so much that he sent his Son to save us from our sins. God's Son became one of us so that he could show us God's love and at the same time help us see that God wants us to be his friends and to live forever with him in heaven.

So Jesus preached the Good News of God's love, healed the sick, told the people of his day to repent of their sins. Many people began to follow Jesus and he also appointed the twelve apostles to learn from him and to help him. When the time came, Jesus died on the Cross to save us from our sins. He did this because sin causes a lot of trouble and misery in our lives and it gets in the way of our friendship with God and other people. In giving up his life, Jesus showed how much he loves us. But that wasn't all; he also rose from dead on the first Easter morning. In this way he showed us that God's love is stronger than our sins and more powerful than death itself.

The Ascension

After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to the Apostles. They were glad to see the Lord but they were also confused and frightened. Yet, as the Lord kept appearing to them, they began to see what a wonderful thing had happened when the Lord rose from the dead. After a while, Jesus also told the Apostles that he would always be with them but not always in a visible way but in a very real spiritual way.

When the time came, the Risen Lord, returned to the Father. Scripture tells us that he ascended into the heavens, and that is why we speak of today's feast as the Ascension. But in the moments before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told the Apostles to do two things: First was to bring the Gospel to the whole world; Second was to pray for the Holy Spirit who would help them understand the Gospel and give them the courage to proclaim it everywhere. Then he ascended into heaven; he went to God. Next week when you come to Mass, you will celebrate the feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles with great power. After receiving the Holy Spirit, they really knew Jesus, they really loved Jesus. They preached his message everywhere, celebrated the Eucharist, and began the work of establishing the Church.

Your Part in This Mission

The mission of Jesus and the Apostles continues to this very day and you are a part of this great mission. People need God's love in their lives. They need Jesus. When they see young people like you learning to follow Jesus, it gets their attention, it means a lot to them.

There are many ways you are learning the faith: First in your homes where your parents teach the faith by word and example; Second when you come to Church each Sunday to attend Mass; Third your religious education classes, in your parish or in a Catholic school. And in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation you receive the Holy Spirit, just like the Apostles, so that you can really know Jesus and be his follower, right now, while you are still very young.

And finally, Scouting is a big part of your faith formation. It teaches you to know and love your faith, and to become a good, honest, virtuous person who is willing to help other people, especially those in need. It teaches you to take good care of yourself,

to develop your talents, to have discipline and order in your lives, to obey God and his commands and to your country. In Scouting you learn how to make a promise and keep it by living up to your oath. So in all these ways Christ is instructing you, like he instructed the Apostles, so that as you grow into adulthood you can be his followers who will influence others to practice their faith.

As you go through the Scouting program and win many awards, please start thinking and praying about the vocation Jesus has in mind for you. Maybe some of you are called to the priesthood or to the religious life. I was in elementary school when I realized God wanted me to be a priest so you're too young to start thinking about your vocation in life. Whatever God is calling you to do, Scouting is an excellent preparation.

So I congratulate you on your achievements and with your parents, your families, your Scout leaders I pray that you have the formation you need to become an Apostle, one who is sent by the Risen and Exalted Lord, into the world to bear witness to God's love. May the Lord bless you and keep you in His love!