



TB 014 - Explorers of the invisible

This handout is aimed at giving some guidelines to Scout leaders who have some difficulties to implement one of the three principles of Scouting: "Duty to God". It is based on the booklet published under the same title by the World Scout Bureau in 2002 and given to each Patrol at the World Scout Jamboree in Thailand.

1. Spiritual development in Scouting

1.1 Fundamental aspects

Spiritual development is one of the 5 areas of personal growth identified by Scouting (the other areas of growth are physical, intellectual, emotional and social). *Duty to God* is one of the three principles of Scouting with duty to self and duty to others. Duty to God is defined by the Constitution of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement as follows:

- Adherence to spiritual principles
- Loyalty to the religion that expresses them
- and acceptance to the duties resulting therefrom.

In the RAP User's guide (edited by the European Scout Office in 2000), the spiritual development is defined as follows:

Acquiring a deeper knowledge and understanding of the spiritual heritage of one's own community, discovering the Spiritual Reality which gives meaning to life and drawing conclusions for one's daily life, whilst respecting the spiritual choices of others.

1.2 Role of the Scout leader

The role of the Scout leader relating to spiritual development is not to give religious instruction, or to tack religious observances onto Scout activities.

*Religion can only be "caught", not "taught". It is not a dressing donned from outside, put on for Sunday wear. It is a true part of boy's character, a development of soul, and not a veneer that may peel off. The actions of a very large proportion of our men are, at present, very little guided by religious conviction. This may be attributed to a great extent to the fact that often **instruction** instead of **education** has been employed in the religious training of the boy.*

(Robert Baden-Powell, Scouting for Boys)



The role of the Scout leader is to use the kind of experiences offered by Scouting to help young people discover a Spiritual reality and incorporate it into their own lives. In fact, Scouting proposes a 5-step approach to spiritual development.

i. Enable young people to experience spirituality through Scout activities

In many cultures, the term "God" designates, on the one hand, the Creator or source of everything and, on the other hand, absolute goodness or a principle of salvation which pervades the history of humanity. There are thus two possible ways of discovering God: by exploring the wonders of creation and nature; by experiencing life within a human community. Traditional Scout activities do indeed permit these types of experiences:

- Hiking, exploring, camping and actions to preserve the environment all enable young people to discover and admire the wonders of nature and life itself.
- Welcoming, learning to listen, building relationships with other people, however poor or destitute, showing compassion, sharing; co-operating within a team, sharing responsibilities, serving others, etc. All these are activities which aim at discovering and developing a human community.

ii. Make time for young people to discover and express the meaning of life

A Scout leader also needs to propose opportunities for evaluating and celebrating experiences, in other words, to provide activities which enable young people to analyse their own experiences in the light of the Scout Law and Promise, in order to discover their meaning and

value. It is through these kinds of activities, which include moments of silence, meditation and expression that young people can experience the need to pray and worship.

iii. Help each individual to identify with his or her spiritual and religious heritage

A major concern is how to help each young person make links between the experiences gained within Scouting and the spiritual and religious heritage which has been transmitted to him or her by the family and local community. With the onset of adolescence, it is normal for a young person to challenge this heritage, question its relevance and have doubts. It is necessary to pass through this stage in order to truly adopt this heritage and develop an adult approach to spirituality, religion and faith.

iv. Encourage internalisation and personal commitment

Spiritual development is meaningful only if it becomes internalised and leads to personal commitment. This is why one of the essential criteria for progression is the application of acquired spiritual and religious values in daily life.

v. Develop open and respectful attitudes

One of the fundamental convictions of the Scout Movement is that spiritual development should bring people together in fellowship, instead of separating them or bringing them into conflict. Since modern societies are those which thrive on communication and exchange and comprise a multiplicity of cultures and faiths, it is essential to prepare young people for such diversity. They need to overcome prejudices and develop open-mindedness and respect for faiths which are different from their own, whilst being able to express their personal convictions without aggressiveness.

2. Exploring the Invisible

2.1 Learning by doing

How does progress in spiritual development take place? As in the case of the other areas of personal growth, this is achieved through activities and experiences: "learning by doing" is the basic educational tool of Scouting and it is also valuable for spiritual development.

Scout are explorers. During the camps and the hikes, they have to find their way in the natural environment; but more fundamentally, with the support of Scout activities, they have to find their way in life, they have to find a meaning in their life. This is the spiritual exploration leading to God.

At the World Scout Jamboree in Thailand, Scouts were invited to become "Explorers of the Invisible":

"There are thousands of discoveries to be made at the Jamboree through activities and encounters. There is also a big mystery to explore and unravel, and that is the mystery of humanity... At the World Jamboree, we will also be "explorers of the invisible". All the experiences that we are going to live through at the Jamboree have a meaning. If we are attentive enough, through camp life, meeting others and the activities on offer each day, we will make discoveries that will matter throughout our lives."

2.2 The five "W"

In the RAP User's Guide five "trails" or types of activities are proposed, which can lead to spiritual development. The British Scouts call them the five "W":

- *Welcome*: listening, being receptive to others, showing compassion.
- *Wonder*: being sensitive to the wonders of nature and life; recognising a spiritual reality in it.
- *Work*: playing an active role in one's community; sharing responsibilities; co-operating with others to bring about improvements.
- *Wisdom*: developing responsibility towards oneself; being able to exercise self-discipline.
- *Worship*: recognising the meaning of past experience, being able to express it and celebrate it.

Spiritual development can be achieved if Scout activities offer this kind of experience.

2.3 How to explore the invisible?

At the World Scout Jamboree in Thailand, an approach of "spiritual review" was experienced by a large number of Patrols. It was explained as follows:

Every evening, in each sub-camp, the Patrols will be invited to spend a moment reflecting, in order to discover and reflect on the spiritual dimension of the day's experiences.

Here is one suggested way of making this time interesting and fruitful (see diagram 1).

A. Scan the horizon

With our fellow Patrol members, let us review the events of the day, both the daily camp life and the activities we have participated in. In our logbook let us note all the aspects that caught our attention because they were unexpected, unusual, funny, moving, a learning experience for us.

B. Take a bearing

Once we have completed the list, let us spend some time in silence, each of us reflecting on the spiritual meaning of the aspects that have been

noted. let us start with those which we find the most striking. Why do we find a particular aspect funny, moving or meaningful? What values does it represent for us, in the light of the Scout Law and in the light of our faith?

Each of us shares the results of his reflection with the others.

C. Choose a course

The Patrol discusses and chooses a conclusion for the review. This can be:

- a sentence summarising the most important reflection of the day;
- or a prayer written by the Patrol;
- or a spiritual text found in the logbook which fits very well with one of the values experienced during the day;
- or a special effort that the Patrol has decided to make in order to better respect the Scout values, etc.

3. Scouts' Owns

What we suggested each patrol organises every evening at the World Scout Jamboree is also called a Scouts' Own. Here are some complementary elements to prepare and run a Scouts' Own.

3.1 What is a Scouts' Own?

Let us first of all look at what it is not.

- It is not a religious service. Our aim is not to replace religious service by Scouts' Own.
- Nor is it a multi-faith service
- It is not a parade or a ceremony in uniform.

So, what is it?

- An interlude in the activities and camp life when we express together something deep and more enduring that we have discovered in the midst of what we are trying to achieve, learn, experience.
- Recognition of a spiritual reality or the presence of God in our lives, expressed in a way that can be shared by all through our different religious and spiritual traditions.

3.2 How to organise a Scouts' Own?

A Scouts' Own can take a wide variety of forms. It can be a time of silence and meditation as a patrol when a few thoughts are shared. Or it can be a reading and songs, music and dance. Why not?

What aspects should be taken into account to ensure a successful Scouts' Own?

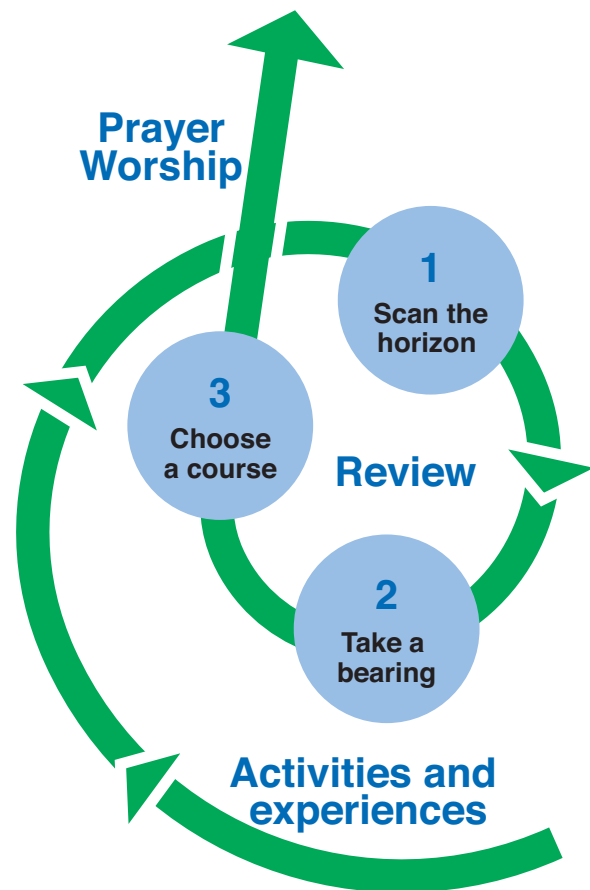


Diagram 1

The time

It is important to choose a moment in the day when everyone is relaxed and refreshed enough to share their thoughts with the others. Why not in the morning, after breakfast, when everyone is full of energy and expectations ahead a new day? Or perhaps in the evening, after the activities, when everyone has had a shower and feels refreshed after a full day?

It is up to you to decide. But do not take the others by surprise. Announce the time of the Scouts' Own in advance and invite the others to take part, giving them time to prepare themselves.

The place

A Scout's Own should not take place just anywhere. You cannot share thoughts or practise some soul-searching and meditation when you are surrounded by noise, a crowd, the smell of food, or in an aggressive and ugly setting.

You therefore need to choose a suitable place with care. For example, somewhere in nature overlooking beautiful scenery.

Key roles

It is difficult to ensure a successful Scouts' Own without a team responsible for preparing and running it. You need people to choose and

decorate the place, musicians and/or singers to choose the music and songs and lead them, readers, a team leader to oversee the organisation of the whole event and introduce the Scouts' Own.

Content and order

In the case of the World Scout Jamboree, we proposed a progression in three steps: "Scan the horizon", "Take a bearing", "Choose a course". These three steps have the advantage in using the symbolic framework of exploration. However, more generally, a Scouts' Own will comprise 3 parts: introduction, sharing and conclusion.

- Introduction

In order to be able to say what you feel and share the meaning of what you have experienced, you need to prepare yourself. That is why a period of introduction is necessary. You could play a piece of calm, yet joyful music. Or you could sing a welcome song together and then somebody could say a word of introduction. The main thing is to create an atmosphere that encourages calm, listening and "togetherness".

- Sharing

After the introduction, a trigger is needed to encourage everyone to express themselves. The easiest way is a narrative, a story on which everyone is invited to comment. It could be a story from a book on a subject that corresponds to what the group has experienced. It could be one of the members of the group who recounts what he or she has experienced that day: something that surprised them and made them think.

After the story, everyone is invited to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. Nobody is obliged to speak. The main thing is to keep it simple and to be respectful of everyone. However, the leader should invite and encourage everyone to take the floor. Even those who are shy or feel awkward should feel at ease. Means other than speech can also be used. For example, the participants could be asked to write key words or short sentences on a board to express what they want to share with the rest of the group.

- Conclusion

Once the period of sharing is over, it is a good idea to allow a moment of silence for internalisation and reflection. Then the team leader should say a few words or read out a text to conclude the Scouts' Own: expressed thanks

for what the group has experienced, call for greater communion between everyone or for a commitment to changing things around them, etc.

A closing song could also be proposed.

Resources

In order to support this approach, the "logbook" entitled "Explorers of the invisible" proposed a number of small texts from various thinkers and from various religions and corresponding to the main activities of the Jamboree: arriving from the four corners of the globe; building together; Life in the sub-camps; the Global Development Village; Crossroads of culture; City of sciences; the Community Action day, etc.

These texts were sorted according to several key words (the values that could be discovered during the activities) such as: Action and service; Compassion; Faith, religion; Friendship, love; Human rights, freedom; Justice; Peace; Team, community; World brotherhood; etc.

This is exactly what a team of Unit leaders can do when preparing a set of activities or a camp: identify the spiritual potential of these activities, e.g. the values which can be experienced through these activities. Then, collect some texts, stories, songs that could illustrate these values and prepare for the Scouts a logbook to be used during the camp.

This approach can be used whatever the religious background of young people may be. Furthermore, it is recommended - as was done at the World Scout Jamboree - to propose some texts coming from various faiths or spiritual heritages in order to show to the Scouts that all the people around the world are sharing the same values and the same hopes.

Do not forget: "one of the fundamental convictions of the Scout Movement is that spiritual development should bring people together in fellowship, instead of separating them or bringing them into conflict". That does not mean that we have to develop a spiritual approach mixing up all the religions. Not at all: confusion is to be avoided. However we need to help young people to "overcome prejudices and develop open-mindedness and respect for faiths which are different from their owns"...

This is why "Explorers of the Invisible" comprises a short presentation of the main religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism.



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