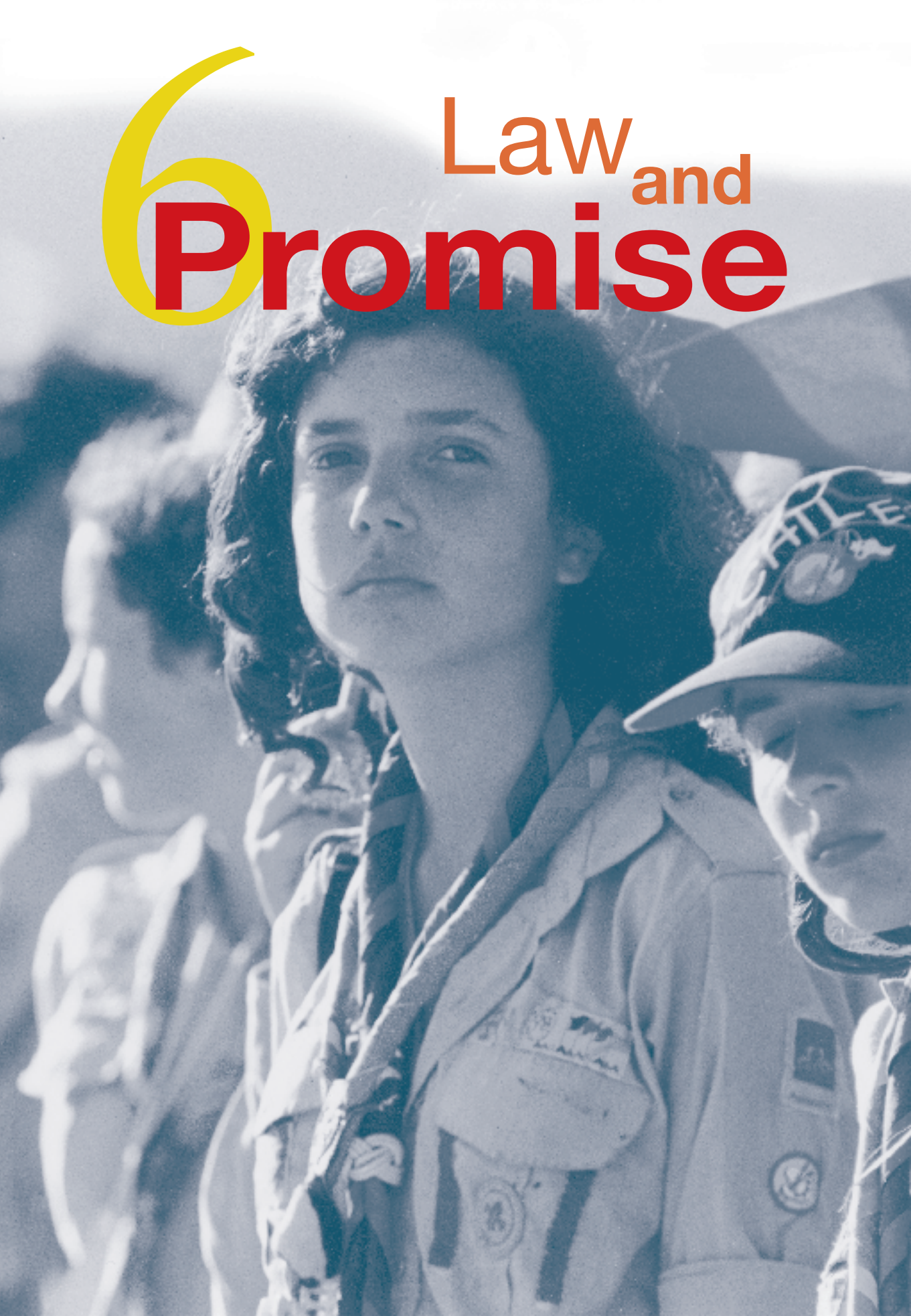


6 Law and Promise





CONTENTS

SCOUTING'S EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL

- Scouting contributes to the education of young people through a value system
- The values proposed are a lifelong project for all Scouts

THE SCOUT LAW

- The rule of law is a central issue in early adolescence
- Children realize that rules are a function of mutual consent from about the age of 10 or 11
- Before the age of 10 or 11 morality is conventional
- Children start to make the shift to moral autonomy from the age of 10 or 11
- Young people learn the value of rules from the example of their “models” and from the experience of relating to their peers
- Young people assimilate the Scout Law the same way they internalize rules: through leaders who are examples of the law and through the experience of group life in the patrols and unit
- The Scout Law proposes living by our values

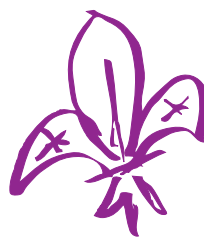
SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SCOUT LAW

- A Scout is trustworthy
- A Scout is loyal
- A Scout is helpful to others
- A Scout shares with everyone
- A Scout is kind
- A Scout protects life and nature
- A Scout is organized and does nothing by halves
- A Scout takes life cheerfully
- A Scout takes care of his or her things and values work
- A Scout is clean in thought, word and deed

THE SCOUT PROMISE

- The Promise is a voluntary commitment
- Through the Promise, we make a commitment to be the best we can be
- Our first commitment is to God
- We make a commitment to our country and to peace
- We promise to make the Scout Law an integral part of our life
- Making the Promise is a very important moment in the life of a Scout
- The young people decide if they are ready to make the commitment
- The motto reminds us of the promise we have made
- The good turn is a demonstration of the commitment undertaken
- The Scout prayer asks for the strength to meet our commitment

SCOUTING'S EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL



SCOUTING CONTRIBUTES TO THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH A VALUE SYSTEM

The *mission* of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people so that they can help build a better world, where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

This mission is achieved through the use of the *Scout Method*, which makes the young person the principal agent in his or her development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person.

An essential aspect of the Method is an invitation to young people to adhere to certain spiritual, social and personal principles. These principles constitute a *value system* that is shared by Scouts all over the world, and Associations express it in different ways in their *educational proposals*.

THE VALUES PROPOSED ARE A LIFELONG PROJECT FOR ALL SCOUTS



These principles constitute a proposal that is undertaken personally by each individual and they represent a challenge for all of us who are Scouts. They invite young people and adults alike to strive constantly for fulfilment.

Some national associations have different wordings for the educational proposal, but the different versions all express the same value system. The text on the following page proclaims the values of Scouting using a tone that gives them a certain distinction, as an indication of the standing of the ideal we seek to achieve.



**EACH MAN AND WOMAN WHO SHARES THE EXPERIENCE OF SCOUTING
AIMS TO DO THEIR BEST TO BE:**

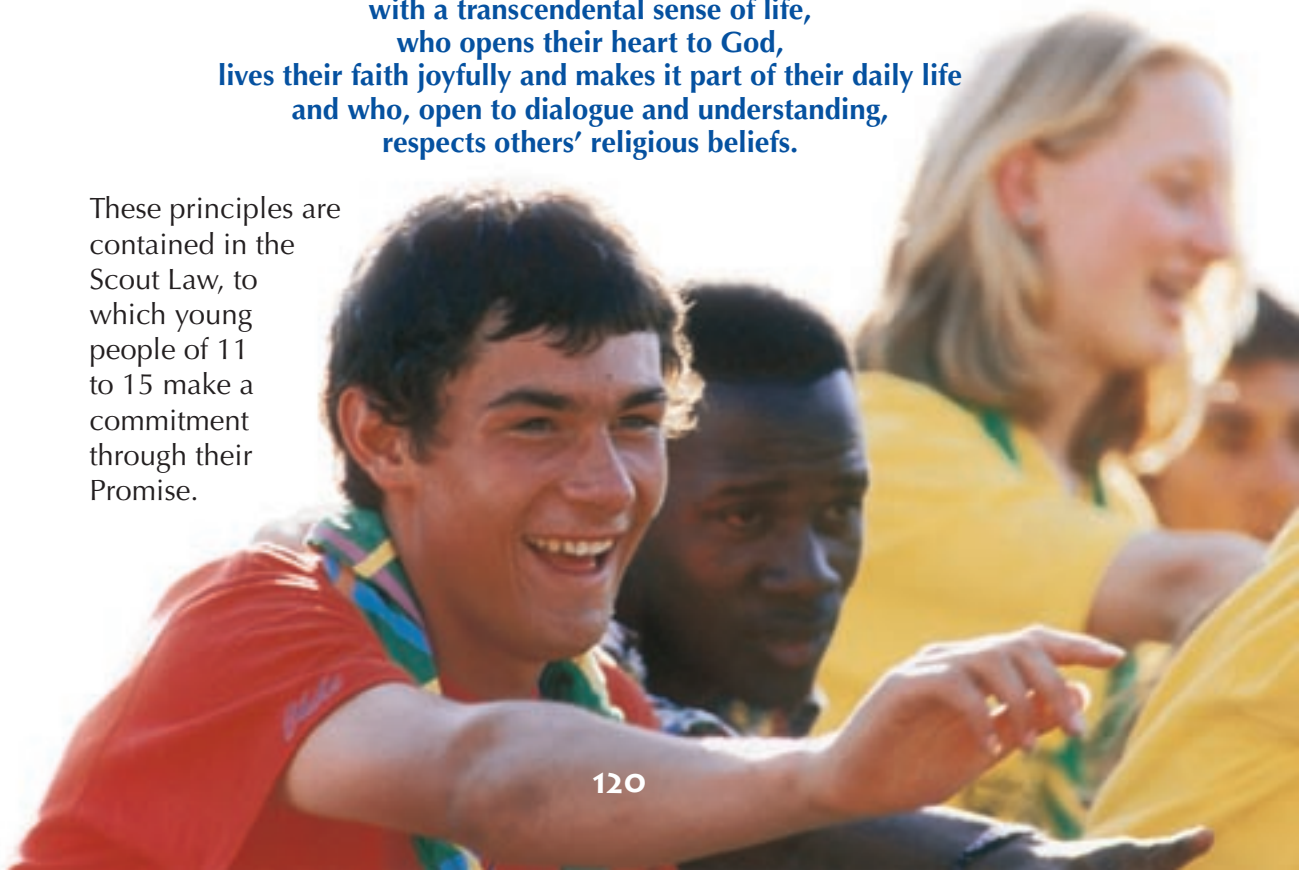
A person with freedom and integrity,
clean of thought and true of heart,
strong of will, responsible and self-reliant,
with a personal commitment for their life
constant and true to their word.

Ready to serve others,
involved with their community,
defender of other people's rights,
pledged to democracy and committed to development,
lover of justice and promoter of peace,
who values human labour,
and builds their family on love,
aware of their own dignity and that of others,
sharing with everybody joyfully and affectionately.

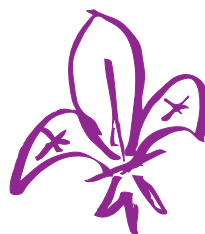
A creative person
who leaves the world better than they find it,
and strives for the integrity of the natural world,
learning continually,
and searching for ways still unexplored,
who does their work well
and, free from the hunger to possess,
is independent of material things.

A spiritual person,
with a transcendental sense of life,
who opens their heart to God,
lives their faith joyfully and makes it part of their daily life
and who, open to dialogue and understanding,
respects others' religious beliefs.

These principles are
contained in the
Scout Law, to
which young
people of 11
to 15 make a
commitment
through their
Promise.



THE SCOUT LAW



THE RULE OF LAW IS A CENTRAL ISSUE IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

The rule of law constitutes one of the major issues of the early stage of adolescence. At this stage it is important to develop a positive and responsible attitude to rules and build one's own personal moral values.

An initial feature of adolescence is a lack of discipline and a tendency to question the authority of parents and of adults in general, particularly from the perspective of the adults who, at first, are often disconcerted by the young people's new attitudes and react inflexibly. Rules which were readily accepted during childhood are now questioned. This is a necessary and instrumental stage in a young person's progress towards moral autonomy. Rather than trying to suppress this questioning attitude, our role as educators is to encourage and support it. A great deal of importance is attached to this point in the Method of the Scout Section, for the failure to establish moral autonomy in adolescence may have serious consequence for the future equilibrium of the personality.



CHILDREN REALIZE THAT RULES ARE A FUNCTION OF MUTUAL CONSENT FROM ABOUT THE AGE OF 10 OR 11

Simple observation of how children view and accept the rules of play sheds some light on the development of the concept of rules.

At play, rules are the result of a compromise between two contradictory desires: on the one hand, the desire to win, to be the strongest, to affirm oneself vis-à-vis the others; and, on the other, the desire to continue playing "with" the others. If I want to win all the time, the other children will become frustrated and will not want to play with me any more. For the game to continue, I have to allow others the possibility of winning too. I have to be capable of "putting myself in their place", and accepting rules that objectively define the rights and obligations of each player and determine how the game is won.

Until the age of 2 or 3, children have no sense of rules at all. They use toys as the whim takes them, throw them around, bury them, lose interest in them, and pick them up again. Children of pre-school age play "alongside" each other but not "with" each other. This is clearly seen in nursery schools and kindergartens, where children can be seen playing beside each other but their games are not really interactive.

From the age of 5 or 6 and up to 9 or 10, rules are present in children's minds as something sacrosanct. They are viewed as emanating from adults and therefore unalterable. Children at this age are not yet able to internalize rules, because they are still too gripped by their desire to affirm themselves and they are not yet able to put themselves in the place of others, although this varies as they grow. They imitate the rules imposed by their elders, but they still do not genuinely respect these rules. There will always be a player who cheats because the desire to win is too strong. When this happens, everyone fights, the game comes to a halt, they sort out the disagreement and the game recommences, only to stop a few minutes later amidst new quarrels.

From the age of 7 or 8, children gradually become better at cooperating in a group situation and sharing out the responsibilities involved in pursuing a shared objective, as they come to acknowledge rules. The learning process at this age consists of obeying and following rules. That is why the Cub Scout law begins with the proposal to “listen to and respect others”. But, as there is still no reasoned acceptance of rules, there cannot yet be full cooperation. Therefore, at Pack level, the six basically facilitates group organization and monitoring. It does not become a “life community” in the way that the Patrols and, to an even greater extent, the teams of the Senior Sections do.



It is only from about the age of 10 or 11 that this changes: children begin to perceive that rules spring from mutual consent. From then on, they are of the opinion that rules do not emanate from adults. They themselves have invented the rules and they can change them if they all agree to.

BEFORE THE AGE OF 10 OR 11 MORALITY IS CONVENTIONAL



of 7 or 8, children do not judge acts for themselves. They are content to label them “good” or “bad” or “right” or “wrong” on the basis of cultural norms. Children submit to authority only for immediate personal gain and to avoid punishment. They are likely to consider, for example, that the more unlikely a lie is, the worse it is. Doing something silly is serious only to the extent of the material damage it causes. The intention is not what counts. Punishment is viewed as expiatory: the guilty party must suffer a punishment of a magnitude that is in proportion with the seriousness of the fault.

From the rules of the game, we move on to moral rules. Until the age

The ages of 7 or 8 to about 10 or 11 constitute the stage of conventional morality. Children adjust their behaviour to the expectations of their parents or the social group, according to what they perceive a “good boy” or a “good girl” to mean. Law and order and respect for authority are seen as absolutes. Sometimes people can remain blocked at this level into adulthood if they are not exposed to an adequate breadth of social experience or if they are subject to an education that is excessively rigid or authoritarian. In terms of the figure that follows, we could say that these adults are trapped in the submissive behaviour of childhood and –since they are adults and not children– their behaviour could be defined as neurotic.

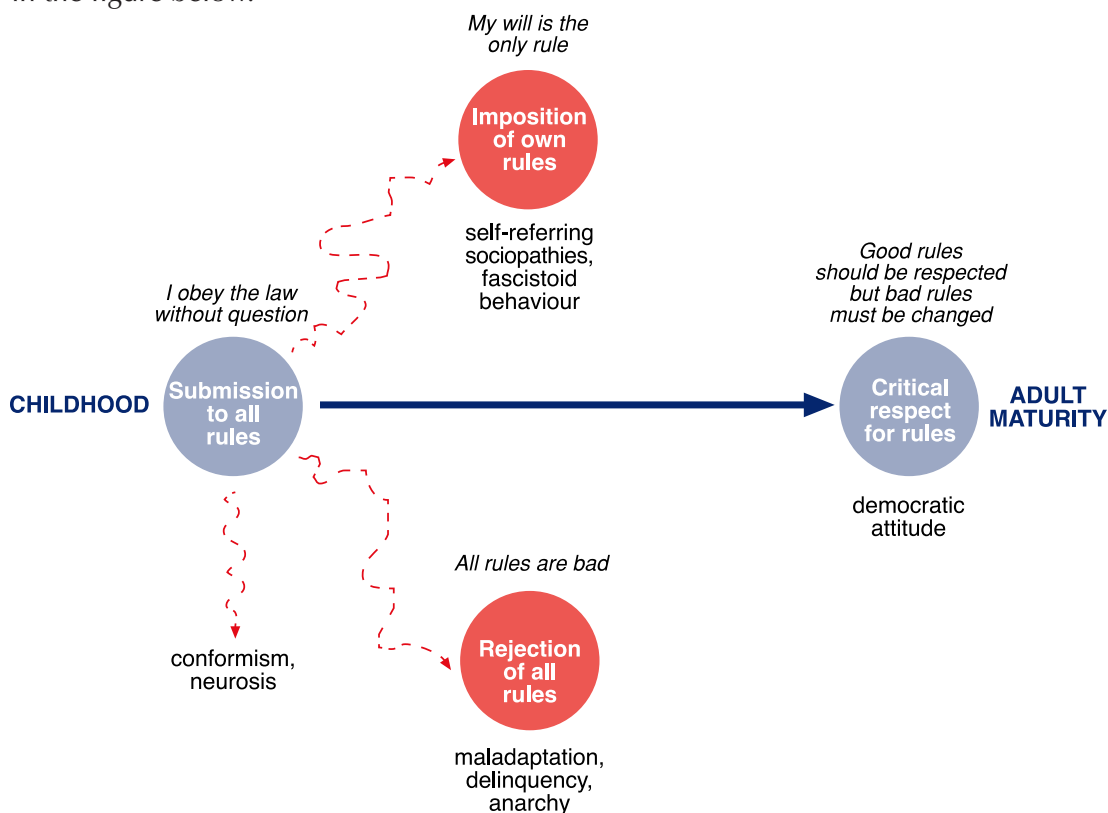
CHILDREN START TO MAKE THE SHIFT TO MORAL AUTONOMY FROM THE AGE OF 10 OR 11



From the age of 10 or 11, as they become capable of logical reasoning, children gradually move into the stage of moral autonomy.

They are able to judge people on the basis of their actions and pick out very personal features of their character. They can perceive shortcomings and weaknesses and no longer have blind faith in their authority. Thus they begin to judge for themselves their own actions and those of others.

Moral principles are accepted on a personal basis as a way of sharing rights and duties within the group they belong to. Towards the age of 12, children accept rules as a kind of contract between individuals. Rules are no longer untouchable but can be changed by mutual consent. Little by little –especially in the second stage of adolescence, towards the age of 15- the young person comes to grasp the concept of universal values: justice, reciprocity, equality and dignity. Moral principles are associated with a “social ideal” rather than with the social reality. “Right” is defined on the basis of a personal and conscious adherence to moral principles. It is, in fact, the threshold of the “adult” concept of law, which entails “discerning respect” and a democratic attitude, as shown in the figure below.



YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN THE VALUE OF RULES FROM THE EXAMPLE OF THEIR “MODELS” AND FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF RELATING TO THEIR PEERS



However, this shift does not continue to completion automatically. As our figure shows, there are many points at which development can be blocked or diverted, actually preventing the individual from reaching moral autonomy and an adult understanding of rules and the law. Certain individuals can exacerbate these difficulties when placed in the position of educators, as they themselves do not have an adequate level of maturity in relation to the law. As we have said, authoritarianism and excessively strict control can imprison people in an attitude of childish submission: “I obey all law and all authority without question”. Overprotecting children and limiting their social interaction with their peers can have a similar effect.

Authoritarianism and overprotection often cause young people to rebel fiercely and reject all forms of law. The rebellious adolescent challenges authority with provoking behaviour and by taking risks. Convinced that “all laws are bad”, the individual in this position is heading for maladaptation and even delinquency.

On the other hand, an overly permissive attitude deprives the young person of the opportunity to develop structure. This type of attitude will keep the person in a state in which the only “rules” are base impulses and personal pleasure. Parents and educators who have suffered too authoritarian an education as young people tend to educate their children and pupils in a *laissez faire* environment, which can lead to various self-referring sociopathies and fascistoid behaviour.

The famous psychologist Jean Piaget distinguished two “engines” that lead the young person toward moral autonomy, to reach an adult level of “discerning respect” vis-à-vis the rules and the law. One is *unilateral respect*, which refers to the respect young people have for their elders and the influence of the adult on the young person; and the other is *mutual respect*, which refers to the reciprocal influence that two people of equal status have on each other. The harmonious development of a young person, especially during adolescence, requires both these influences: “models” with which to identify, which uphold life values, and the opportunity to progress through debate and the development of rules within a group of peers.



YOUNG PEOPLE ASSIMILATE THE SCOUT LAW THE SAME WAY THEY INTERNALIZE RULES:



THROUGH LEADERS WHO ARE EXAMPLES OF THE LAW AND THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF GROUP LIFE IN THE PATROLS AND UNIT

These two engines are essential in the Scout Section. They are represented on the one hand by the Scout Law as a code of values, sustained by the testimony and example of the adults; and on the other by the system of “self-government” offered by the Scout Method through its small autonomous teams (the Patrols), the Unit Council (the “executive power” of the young people’s society) and the Unit Assembly (the “legislative power”) in which group life is evaluated to define and review the rules of life in common, in the light of the Scout Law.

As Piaget put it, these two elements enable the young people “to learn by experience what it means to obey the law, to belong to a social group and to accept personal responsibility”.

The Promise also reinforces the process of experiencing and internalizing values through group life. The Scout Promise is a personal decision, through which young people express their adherence to the values they have discovered, and their commitment to “do their best” to be true to these values and learn more about their meaning as time goes on.

THE SCOUT LAW PROPOSES LIVING BY OUR VALUES



The Scout Law lays out in an orderly manner the values that are proposed in Scouting’s educational proposal and that young people of this age can understand and experience.

But the Law is much more than an orderly arrangement of ideas. It is a code of conduct that is offered to young people to choose and steer their course in life. What is more, it is an invitation to make those values part of their personality. If we are to be consistent, we need to think and act in accordance with our values. Only this way can our values become instruments through which to observe, interpret and experience the world.



The Scout Law is proposed, not imposed. It is a wholly positive and non-arbitrary proposal, expressed in language that is approachable for young people and founded on reasons that are an enticing invitation in themselves.

Through the Scout Promise, at the point in time when he or she feels ready to chose an option, each young person makes a commitment to the values proposed in the Law and pledges to make them part of his or her life.



A SCOUT

Is trustworthy

Is loyal

Is helpful to others

Shares with everyone

Is kind

Protects life and nature

Is organized and does nothing by halves

Takes life cheerfully

Takes care of his or her things and values work

Is clean in thought, word and deed



SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SCOUT LAW



We will go on to discuss the proposals contained in the Scout Law, which may help you to:

- **broaden your understanding of them,**
- **think about their impact on your own life; and**
- **find the words and images to present them to the young people in your Unit.**

A person is trustworthy when his or her words and deeds are consistent with what they carry inside. A man or a woman whom we can trust, who believes what he or she says, and says what he or she believes. It is an inner openness that enables us to come face to face with the person just as they are.

**A SCOUT IS
TRUSTWORTHY**



It is sincerity, genuineness, coherence, good faith. It is the opposite of hypocrisy, lies, double standards, inconsistency and bad faith.

To be trustworthy we have to love the truth and be true to what is true. It is about living and thinking –as far as possible– in truth, even if that should cause pain or misfortune. It is not lying to oneself nor to others. It is knowing that genuine sadness is better than false happiness.

A real Scout stakes his or her honour on deserving trust. On the fact that when they say “yes”, it means “yes”, and when they say “no”, it means “no”. Their honour is not staked on money, name, success, power or any of the other trappings of which people are often proud.

All their honour is based on the fact that others can trust them because their deeds are true to their words.





A SCOUT IS LOYAL

Loyalty –or fidelity, which is the same– is the durability of our faith in what is important. It is living in recognition of what is permanent and lasting. It is the endless perpetuation of the fight against oblivion or denial. Through loyalty, we reconcile our existence with our history and our personality becomes stable, firm and consistent.

It is not a question of being faithful to anything at all: that would not be loyalty but rather routine, obstinacy, evasion or laziness. Loyalty depends on the values you are being faithful to. Faithfulness to stupid things is just a perpetuation of stupidity. You don't change friends like you change shirts, and it would be as absurd to be faithful to a shirt as it would be reprehensible not to be loyal to your friends.

Loyalty does not pardon all sins: being loyal to something bad is worse than failing to admit complicity. Torturers swear loyalty to each other in the complicity of their work, but their fidelity in crime is criminal, because fidelity to evil is evil fidelity. And no-one can say that resentment is a virtue, for all the resentful person holds fast to his hatred.

Loyalty is the active belief in the constancy of our values. It is the full and conscious devotion to a cause, in principle and in practice, and also to the links we forge with other people as depositories of shared values. It is persistence in those of our acts we believe to be important.

For Scouts, the things that deserve our loyalty are expressed in the synthesis of our promise: love for God; service to our country, its land and its people; and the abiding effort to be true to the values contained in the Scout Law, such as truth, solidarity, protection of life and nature, cheerfulness, and cleanliness of heart.

Our personal identity is founded on this fidelity. Human beings change constantly and we are not always the same, but however intense these transformations, as Scouts, our identity is based on the loyalty we have promised to ourselves, to others, to the world and to God.

Only through loyalty is it possible to have a life plan, to project our present commitment as a way of life that we want to follow always.



A SCOUT IS HELPFUL TO OTHERS



By our very essence, as men and women, we are individuals who relate to each other all the time. In different ways and in differing degrees, our lives are constantly altered by the presence of other people, just as our acts have an impact on the lives of those around us.

Living in society is much more than coexistence; it is an invitation to live constructively by putting our best efforts towards attaining happiness and helping others to build their own happiness.

Scouts believe that this fulfilling experience of sharing with others is expressed in one of its most meaningful ways through service. We believe that serving others means looking upon other human beings with care and respect, it is discovering others just as they are, putting ourselves freely at their disposal so that each person can be all they are called upon to be, based on their own dignity.

We do not believe in the kind of subservience that humiliates both the giver and the receiver, nor in disdain disguised as false compassion. We believe in love born of respect, channelled into a constant and deeply-rooted attitude of solidarity, of being with others and being oneself with them. We are convinced that everything we do in benefit of others helps us to grow spiritually and be more fulfilled, it helps us to view life with hope and brings us closer to the mystery of humankind.

That is why Scouts encourage service, because we understand that through it we can find others and through others we can find God.



A SCOUT SHARES WITH EVERYONE



Serving others and sharing with everyone are, in a sense, two sides of a coin. How can we serve others, meaningfully and freely, unless we share with them? How can we share with others without that encounter leading us to an attitude of service and generosity?

Sharing means practising generosity. On the one hand, material generosity, by putting our goods and possessions in the service of others. But in a deeper sense, sharing is having an open attitude towards other people and their particular way of seeing the world and living their lives.

Sharing is not simply devoting time to others, it is making a space for them in our lives. Men and women who share are brave people who have dared to overcome their fears, who have trusted others and been capable of looking beyond their prejudices to really discover others and discover themselves.

Someone who shares discovers that we all have something to communicate, we all need spaces in which to express ourselves, we all deserve to be respected and appreciated. Someone who shares lives in tolerance, practises friendship and cultivates love.



A SCOUT IS KIND



At its most humble level, kindness is the gentleness of good manners, respect and goodwill towards others. The ancient Greeks saw kindness as synonymous with humanity, the opposite of barbarity.

But it can also be seen in a much more noble context, as the ability to reach out and embrace others just because we wish them well. Kindness to the poor is something akin to generosity; kindness to the unfortunate is goodness; and shown to the guilty it can be expressed as pardon and understanding.

From this perspective, kindness becomes sweetness and develops into a force for peace, courage without violence, sensitive valour. It is the opposite of war, brutality and aggressiveness.

Kindness is the tangible expression of solidarity and love. How could we serve and reach out to others without being kind?

Being truly kind comes from within; it is never a strategy or a pose. There is nothing more false than self-seeking kindness, when someone is kind in their own interests, because they want to seduce or be successful. That is not real kindness – it has no sweetness, only narcissism and artifice. Kindness is a gift in itself and cannot be faked like an art of seduction or adulation. It is no longer kindness if it is a pretence in order to gain power over others.

The virtue of openness, patience, adaptability. A virtue that is at the very roots of Scouting, which brings together people from very different backgrounds. A virtue which is a legacy from the very soul of the Founder and which, of course, has to be practised without going against any of the other duties which come before it. Kindness is only good when it does not sacrifice the requirements of justice and love. How could we be kind to a despot and forget the rights of the persecuted? How could we smile at the hangman and ignore his victim's pleas for protection?

Also, we must not confuse kindness and sweetness with courtesy, which is more of a formality. Courtesy is only skin-deep. A courteous *Mafioso* does not mitigate in the least the horrors of the Mafia. A cheat is no less worthless for being courteous and perhaps even more so. A courteous cheat is all the worse, for pretending to be something he is not.

While courtesy can be form only, the appearance of virtue and only that, kindness and sweetness are lasting and capable of transforming people, because they are deep qualities of the soul.



A SCOUT PROTECTS LIFE AND NATURE



Life is an extraordinary phenomenon, awe-inspiring and unique. Life is the space and time of our dreams, our hopes, our passions and our efforts. Life is the beginning of our story and our story is the encounter with life.

Life is in the freshness of the morning. It is present even in the pain of disease and the horror of war. Life is present in the encounter with our friends and the longing for their warmth when they are absent. Life is the sound and silence of men and of nature. Life is in our achievements and in our failures. In men and women who forge ahead to challenge the mysteries of science and technology. Life makes human beings and human beings are called upon to respect life.



To respect and protect life is to protect and empower humanity, men and women, children, young people, adults and the elderly, without distinction as to lineage, race, creed, political thought or social condition, recognizing them as possessors of an intrinsic dignity and equal and inalienable rights which allow all the members of the human family to live in freedom, justice and peace.

To respect and protect life is also to be aware of the relationship between humankind and other animal and plant species. It is to respect nature and make an active commitment to the integrity of the environment. It is to understand that sustainable development needs people who are concerned about the future and willing to show solidarity with the destiny of humanity and of the other species which are part of the world's ecosystem.

For Scouts, protecting life is part of our Promise and a reflection of the principles which guide us. We have made a commitment to love God, the Creator of life –human life and nature– and to serve humankind, making this world a better place for everyone, for those who are here now and those who will inhabit the planet in the future.





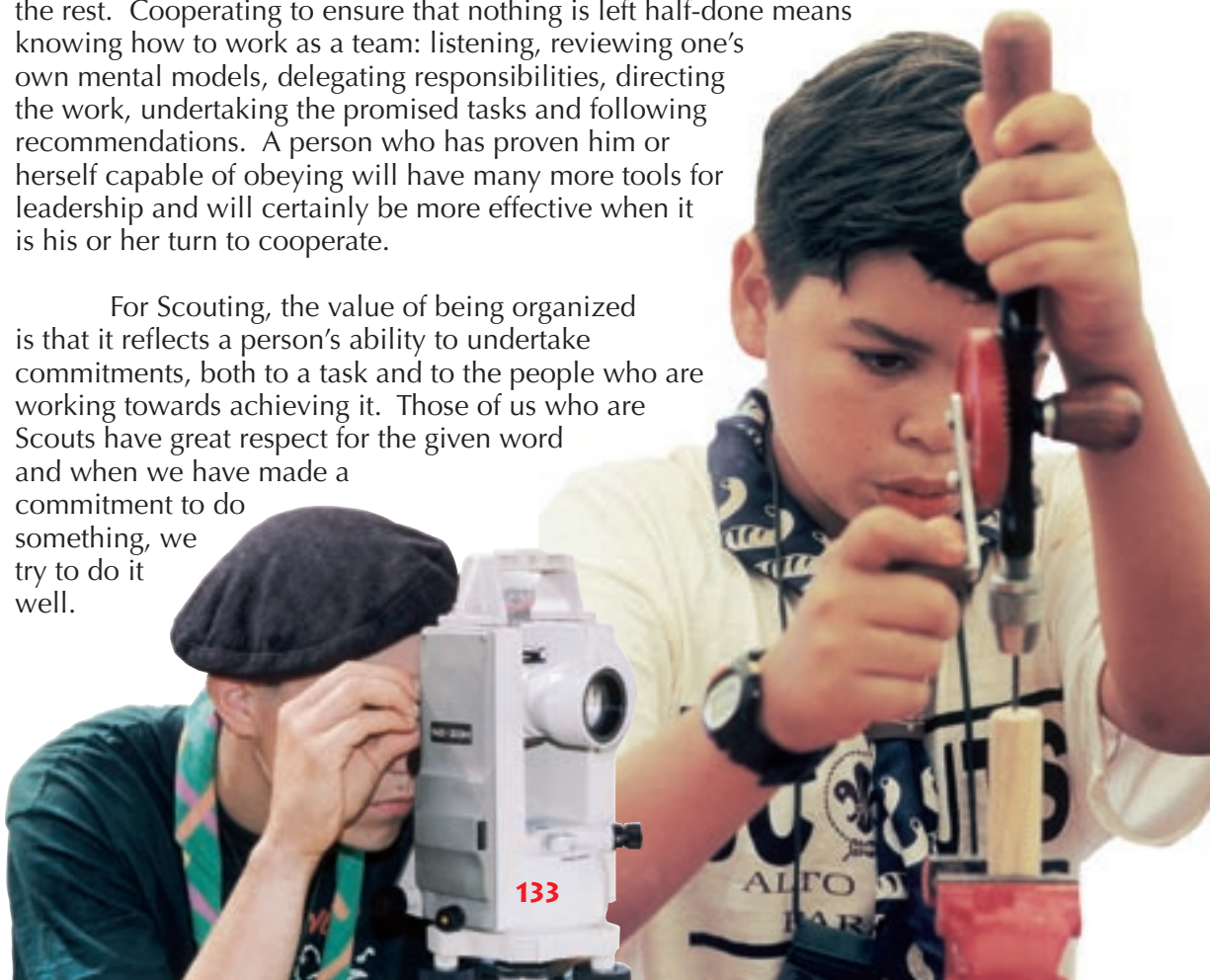
A SCOUT IS ORGANIZED AND DOES NOTHING BY HALVES

We sometimes consider organizational skills to be a lesser value, having to do with order and possessed by particular people. From this perspective, we are all too willing to tolerate promises that are never kept, uncompleted projects and irresponsible statements. But Scouting's affirmation is about much more than this: it is an invitation to use our capacity for commitment. When a Scout makes a commitment, he or she acts in keeping with it. That means keeping our word because we are trustworthy, completing what we have begun because we value work. A Scout knows that commitments are something we undertake in the eyes of other people who have trusted our word.

A person who makes a commitment organizes their time in order to attain the proposed objective. He or she respects the needs of others, is willing to take the task forward, and tackles the work he or she has embarked upon without excuses. Just because they said they would do it, they set about the task with resolve and energy, with generosity, knowing that there is nothing to boast of in discharging a task that has been committed.

The Scout is organized because he or she appreciates teamwork and understands that, for a project to be successful, everyone must play their part in it. Completing a project as a joint undertaking also entails accepting that there always has to be someone responsible for coordinating or directing the actions of the rest. Cooperating to ensure that nothing is left half-done means knowing how to work as a team: listening, reviewing one's own mental models, delegating responsibilities, directing the work, undertaking the promised tasks and following recommendations. A person who has proven him or herself capable of obeying will have many more tools for leadership and will certainly be more effective when it is his or her turn to cooperate.

For Scouting, the value of being organized is that it reflects a person's ability to undertake commitments, both to a task and to the people who are working towards achieving it. Those of us who are Scouts have great respect for the given word and when we have made a commitment to do something, we try to do it well.



A SCOUT TAKES LIFE CHEERFULLY



A normal healthy child shouts aloud with joy when the class is over and a new part of the day begins. A child loves novelty, the unexpected, an adventure. A child embraces life like someone biting hungrily into an apple. This is how life deserves to be lived.

The joy of living does not preclude a serious attitude to our obligations and relationships. But this seriousness should not be confused with moroseness. Life taken with cheerfulness has a certain taste of triumph about it and transmits the feeling that the person is making the most of their existence. Maybe this is because cheerfulness is an expression of happiness and the search for happiness is what we devote our best efforts to.

There is no shortage of reasons to feel sad or angry, and there are plenty of reasons to be disconcerted or sometimes even desperate. Sadness, anger, confusion and desperation are deeply rooted in fear. Fear of the future, or fear of not being able to control everything that might happen to us, fear that our reactions will not live up to expectations. And perhaps that fear originates in a great vanity, in believing ourselves to be too important or too powerful.

Cheerfulness does not mean laughing at others' misfortune. That would be vain humour, empty and irresponsible laughter. A person who approaches life cheerfully starts by laughing at their own pretension and their own absurdities. They understand not only that the strength to face difficulties comes from the will, but that the will works better when accompanied by a smile. Cheerfulness is more than passing comic amusement. It is a permanent disposition to see the bright side of things and not the gloomy side, as Baden-Powell enjoined us.

Cheerfulness is not laughing at others. That is sarcasm, derision or irony, which is hurtful and not constructive, since it is laughing at the expense of others. Instead, cheerfulness is about laughing with others and inviting them to laugh too, sharing in the good cheer.

Knowing how to laugh is also a sign of good health. It is healthy to be able to look upon even the most desperate situation with a smile. It is health of the body and also of the soul. It is even a sign of wisdom, because can anyone really be wise without a good dose of humour?

Optimism gives us a shield against fear, heightens our curiosity about the uncertain, pushes us to take risks and embark upon adventures. Good humour is an engine which not only benefits ourselves, but also passes on a contagious enthusiasm and goodwill to those around us. Cheerfulness makes us kinder and more lucid, and increases our ability to give friendship and service to others.





A SCOUT TAKES CARE OF HIS OR HER THINGS AND VALUES WORK

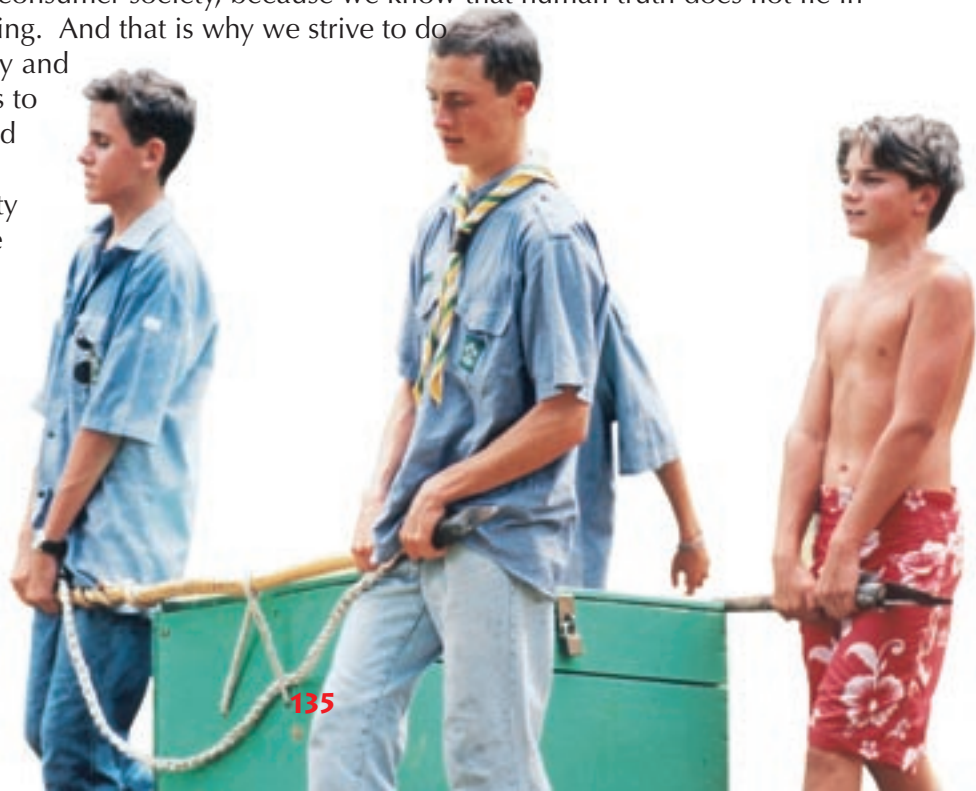
Humankind is called upon to continue God's work of creation in the world. For this we have to discover our potential and use it to do our part in building the world. Giving the best we can give, creatively and in full awareness of the diversity of human skills and expressions.

The history of human effort –and profound social and economic, and scientific and technological changes- has given us the false impression that progress and development consist of the advance of science or mastery of technology, including information technology. Certainly, put to good use, science and technology –like other branches of knowledge– help us to improve our quality of life. But these are nothing without human effort.

Change, progress and development come about thanks to the thoughts, hearts and hands of people. Very few things would be possible without human work and effort. Human work has enabled us to overcome diseases, build cities, establish rapid and efficient forms of communication and technify the production processes. In other words, to make our dreams of progress a reality and improve our quality of life.

Scouts value work because we value humankind and we respect the dreams and utopias of thousands of men and women who unstintingly pour out their efforts day after day. And Scouts take care of things because things are born of human effort.

We are not interested in the mere accumulation of goods, because we know that these are not enough for human happiness. We do not allow ourselves to be caught up in the consumer society, because we know that human truth does not lie in having, but in being. And that is why we strive to do our best every day and prepare ourselves to help build a world that shelters the hopes of humanity and discovers the potential of each of its children.



A SCOUT IS CLEAN IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED



This part of the Scout Law, which refers to integrity and purity, was an addition to the original text made later by Baden-Powell. In itself it does not add anything new to the rest. Its only purpose is to ask us to examine the spirit in which we accept and practise the other proposals in our lives.

We often associate purity with sexual matters, and this is understandable, because purity is closely related to love. Love, or the lack of it, and purity or impurity affect much more than sex, however.

Something is pure when it is free of anything that could alter or adulterate its basic nature. So purity, understood as cleanliness of heart or rectitude of conscience, is the opposite of interest, selfishness, avarice, and anything sordid that could contaminate our words or deeds.

Anything we do unwillingly or with evil intentions is impure. Anything that profanes, lowers, corrupts or makes vile is impure, and anything that twists the sense of what we think or do. It is impure to tell the truth only when it suits us, to feign loyalty, to use others while pretending to help them, to share only with those from whom we can gain something, disguise derision as humour, to do things only because we have to.

In our sexual lives purity does not mean the absence of desire –which would be a disorder– nor is it synonymous with ignorance or naivety. It is not bad to love each other; but it is bad to love only oneself, to love the other as if he or she were an object, to seek to enjoy rather than to love, taking pleasure rather than gladdening, enjoying as one would enjoy food or wine, possessing and consuming. Impurity is not an excess of love, but a lack of love.

Purity is loving the other truly, as a person, respecting them, defending them, even against our own desire. Love which gives and protects, the love of friendship, of benevolence, the love of charity, pure love.

For that reason this last proposal of the Scout Law invites us to take a good look at ourselves, to constantly question the integrity of our souls, and of our thoughts, words and deeds.

It is not an externally-imposed prescription for good behaviour and still less a ban on bad language. It is a burning question which brings us face to face with the significance of our commitment: "Are the values which live in us really what we think they are?"

THE SCOUT PROMISE



THE PROMISE IS A VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT

The Promise is a voluntary commitment made to oneself, to others and to God, to keep the Scout Law. Its words and concepts are simple and set out the commitment in a way that a young person might say it naturally.

**I PROMISE
TO DO MY BEST TO
LOVE GOD,
SERVE MY COUNTRY,
WORK FOR PEACE
AND BE TRUE TO THE SCOUT LAW.**



THROUGH THE PROMISE, WE MAKE A COMMITMENT TO BE THE BEST WE CAN BE



The Promise is a *voluntary offering and not an oath*. When they make their Promise, young boys and girls freely undertake a commitment. They do not renounce anything nor do they take a vow of military or religious nature.

In addition, boys and girls do not promise never to fail in the commitment they have undertaken. That would be impossible and contrary to human nature. They simply promise to give the best of themselves to keep their word. But it is a promise that they make in complete sincerity, with the firm intention to *do their best*.

For the same reason, the leaders should exercise good judgement when they refer to the young people's commitment. Mention of the Promise should be as natural and clear as possible, with no irony or veiled allusions. They should never use words or gestures that suggest they have any doubt about the sincerity of the commitment. They should never reproach an individual or a group in any way over the Promise and any discussion with a young person on aspects that he or she could try to improve should be conducted in a personal and private manner.

Reference to the young people's Promise should be reserved for use as an educational support tool for more open and intimate moments in the group. It is a means to bring into the midst of the community the memory of the values that justify its existence and to which its members have made a commitment. It is not advisable to use this resource too often, as it will lose its power if it becomes common currency. In any case, if the leaders find that they need to evoke the Promise frequently, this may be a sign that something is far amiss in the system.

OUR FIRST COMMITMENT IS TO GOD



God is always present in the day-to-day existence of a Scout Unit, and it is to be hoped that He is also at the heart of the young people's new concerns and projects.

As in any other activity, therefore, it is natural that God's name appears in the Promise. How can we make such a serious commitment without inviting God to witness it?

God is much more than a witness, however. He is not there just to ensure that the Promise is made before the greatest presence in a young person's life. His presence at the Promise is part of the personal relationship that each young person establishes with Him. It is a gesture of acknowledgement of the link between them. As the Creator of all things, God is the first addressee of the Promise, which is made *before Him and in Him*.



Furthermore, the Promise contains an implicit commitment to deepen our relationship with God. Thus the first thing we promise is to love God. Love is a gift that comes from God, it is the greatest of all virtues and Scouts believe that it is present in everything that we do. How could we fail to return this gift to God? How could we fail to return His love in the same way?

When young people promise to love God it does not mean that God is the only recipient of their love, but that they promise to steer their lives with love: love for others, for their family, for their friends, for created things and for their country. Love is everything. Love is enough. That is why a person who loves grows as an individual and grows closer to Him.

Of course young people's vision of love for God will vary depending on their religion. In most religions, however, love for God is seen as it has been presented in these paragraphs.



WE MAKE A COMMITMENT TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO PEACE

A country is above all a territory, a piece of land where we were born or that took us in at a given moment of our lives, or which we have chosen for one reason or another. To serve *my country* is thus, first, to serve the land in which we live, the natural space that we occupy in the wider world. Serving our country therefore means protecting nature, making the soil more fertile, keeping the air pure and the water clean, eliminating waste, not polluting, in short, protecting the surroundings in which we live.

A country is also a people who live on the same piece of land as we do.
How could we serve our country without making a commitment to its people?

To *serve my country* is therefore also a commitment to justice as the basis for peace, a commitment to those who suffer, to the poor, the marginalized, to those who are segregated or left aside. This is how the expression to *serve my country* becomes solidarity with its people.

A country is also a cultural heritage, a way in which people have built their history around the piece of land that they inhabit. We cannot love our land and its people unless we also love the cultural roots and origins. Therefore *serve my country* also means love for the music, traditions, language and cultural styles that form part of our identity. It means acknowledging them, encouraging and taking pride in them.



There is always a risk that pride in our own country may be construed as an exclusive sentiment, as a love that is justified by the childish fiction that our country is the best or that our race is better than all the others. But we can be true to our own roots without discriminating against or looking down upon the culture of other peoples. The Promise is also a commitment to *work for peace*. Working for peace means opening ourselves to international realities, valuing diversity, understanding other cultures and overcoming racist or nationalist tendencies.

When they make their Promise, young people must be invited to try to understand all the dimensions of these expressions and to make a commitment to their deeper meaning. A person who serves their country and works for peace is not created overnight. Such a person is formed in a culture that allows them to experience these dimensions from childhood.

WE PROMISE TO MAKE THE SCOUT LAW AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR LIFE



Finally, the Promise is the way in which young people make a commitment to the Scout Law. Their commitment does not consist of knowing the Law by heart, or reciting it without hesitating or tripping up, or knowing the strict order or number of its articles, or even respecting or just “keeping” it, as if it were an external rule like a set of traffic regulations.

The commitment to the Scout Law is something more. It is about *living the Scout Law* –making it part of our convictions and of our make up, as if it were in our muscle fibre and our bloodstream. If values are embodied in this way, then the Law will be a natural reflection of our personality, attitudes and behaviour, with no need to pretend or make an effort to “keep it up”. This is making the shift from conventional morality to moral autonomy. And that is what the Scout law is all about.

Also, living the Scout law is not just a promise we make for our youth or while we remain in Scouting. The commitment is for life, in Scouting and outside it. It is for our youth and for carrying into our adult lives. This is what many former Scouts mean when they say “once a Scout, always a Scout”.



MAKING THE PROMISE IS A VERY IMPORTANT MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF A SCOUT



The Promise is not made at just any time. The young person's request must be given the importance it deserves, by *setting aside a special time*, in a suitable place, with due preparation. The Unit, friends and family are given notice of when the Promise is to be made and a little ceremony is organized.

This ceremony should not be excessively serious or complicated. It should certainly not resemble an initiation rite in any way. *It is simple and solemn.* It is a genuine celebration in which the Unit and the players in its environment celebrate the fact that a young girl or boy is willing to undertake and fulfil a commitment which he or she has freely chosen to make.



Sometimes there is a tradition of giving the neckerchief only after the Promise has been made, but this is not really a good idea. The neckerchief is part of the uniform and does not symbolize commitment. The only suitable symbol to give on this occasion is the Promise badge, which the young person wears on his or her uniform to signal their commitment.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE DECIDE IF THEY ARE READY TO MAKE THE COMMITMENT



There is no particular right time to make the Promise. It is not linked to the young person's personal progress stages. *The young person simply makes his or her Promise when he or she has finished the introductory period, feels ready and asks the Patrol Council to accept the request.* The leaders should not doubt or question the purpose of the request. Likewise, they should never postpone a promise which has been proposed by the Patrol Council, even if they feel there is a good reason for doing so.



THE MOTTO REMINDS US OF THE PROMISE WE HAVE MADE

The Scout motto
is closely linked to the Promise:

BE PREPARED!

It is almost a shout, a cry of alert, a reminder of the Promise, by which young people remind themselves that they have made a commitment to the Scout Law.



It is not a good idea to overdo the motto by getting the young people to shout it out all the time. It is for important moments: a farewell, the close of a meeting, setting off for camp, beginning a new day. Chorusing the motto is like renewing the Promise, and this symbolic renewal must be afforded the importance it deserves.

THE GOOD TURN IS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE COMMITMENT UNDERTAKEN



The good turn that Scouts try to do every day is closely linked to the Promise and motto.

The good turn is an invitation to act, to turn the commitment into concrete action. It is not enough to shout the motto aloud and remember that one has made a commitment. You also have to do things that show you are acting on that commitment and that motto.

The small services which young people can offer others and the modest help they can give on a day-to-day basis are an invitation to show their spirit of service, a demonstration that they are living up to the motto *be prepared*.

Daily good turns may not seem very significant from the adult point of view. But the adult perspective is not at issue. This educational instrument was not intended to make Scouts solve complex social problems, but rather to keep alive within them a permanent willingness to serve others. It is about combating indifference and showing that other people are important.

At first it may feel a little artificial to have to carry out a good turn every day. This does not matter much either since, little by little, this activity will generate an attitude and, when that happens, the spirit of service will have become a natural expression of the young person's character, an integral part of his or her personality.

THE SCOUT PRAYER ASKS FOR THE STRENGTH TO MEET OUR COMMITMENT



Whatever their religious beliefs, Scouts throughout the world have made this beautiful prayer their own:

Lord
teach us to be generous,
to serve You as You deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to fear harm,
to work and not to ask for rest
and to seek no other reward
than that of knowing we do Your will.

The words of the prayer denote total devotion to the concept of love, which imbues all the proposals of the Promise and Law, and asks God for the strength to carry out what we have promised.

