

**HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR THE 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA NATIONAL JAMBOREE
SUMMIT BECHTEL RESERVE, GLEN JEAN, WEST VIRGINIA
JULY 23, 2023**

My dear friends in Christ, I am always happy to join you at this Mass during your National Jamboree. As the Pope's representative to the United States, I am happy to express his spiritual closeness to you and his prayers. I am grateful to Bishop Mark Brennan, the Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, who invited me here; as well as to Bishop Michael Fisher, the Bishop of Buffalo, who is the new Episcopal Liaison to the National Catholic Committee on Scouting. Bishop Fisher achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and earned the *Ad Altare Dei* Catholic Scouting Religious Emblem. We are also grateful to Bishop Daniel Conlon, the retired Bishop of Joliet, for his past service as Episcopal Liaison. Scouting is also an important part of Bishop Conlon's life, and last year he received the National Duty to God Award.

Dear friends, as I have mentioned in past years, being with you reminds me of my own years of scouting before I entered the seminary, and the virtues that scouting instilled in me. Scouting is an endeavor that always fits well into our life as Christians. To be sure, Christianity is about much more than following a moral code. And yet, when we truly want to follow Jesus as his disciples, that desire leads us to practice a good moral life. Jesus inspires us to grow in the virtues, and living a life of virtue is at the heart of scouting. As scouts, we are happy to earn the badges and awards that are outward signs of our progress. As *Christian* scouts, we enjoy a reward that is even deeper: knowing that we are the children of God. **Today's readings talk about two virtues that are characteristic of God's children, because we learn these virtues from God's own example: *kindness, and patience.***

In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom, the author praises God for his great power. But the author points out an important thing about God: God does not use his power to dominate people who are weak and to crush people who are struggling with sin. Rather, God shows his power most of all by caring for people and judging them with lenience. As the author of Wisdom says to God: "You taught your people...that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins" (*Wisdom 12:19*).

Who here is a child of God?... If you are God's child, then you know how kind and merciful he has been to you. Kindness is a virtue that we have learned by God's own example. To live like a child of God means that we treat others as God has treated us. Here, at this jamboree, we are surrounded by people who are also God's children: our brothers and sisters in the human family. Many of these people we are meeting for the first time. It is easy for us to judge and evaluate others, sometimes in a negative light. That is a temptation. But alongside that temptation, we also have an *opportunity*. We have the opportunity to live like we really are the children of God. And this means showing to others the kindness that God has shown to us. Not only is kindness fundamental to being Christian; it is also a way of being a good scout.

The second virtue is closely related to kindness. It is *patience*. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like the man who sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy planted weeds. Jesus explains what this parable means. The Son of Man, Christ, has sown the "good seed", which represents everyone who is living their lives for God's kingdom. The enemy represents the devil, and the "weeds" he has planted are those people who reject Jesus and go against the disciples of Christ.

At first, we might have the same idea as the slaves of the householder in the parable. Like them, we might say to God: "Why don't you get rid of all the evil in the world right away?" But like the master in the parable, God has a greater wisdom. In some way, if God chose to destroy from this world all evildoers in a sudden and severe act of judgment, those who are good would also be harmed. And so, God is patient. For the time being, we who are committed to living the Gospel of Jesus must do so in a world where some people are opposed to Christ and his truth. This means that we will suffer in this world; but Jesus has assured us, through today's parable, that this is the best way forward. Somehow, living as God's "wheat" in the midst of "weeds" will allow us to grow up and mature, so that, at the end of our lives and at the end of time, we "will shine like the sun in the kingdom of [our] Father" (*Matthew 13:43*).

Have you ever seen a wheat field right before harvest? The tall, golden stalks of grain really do shine in the sun! This is an image for what we will be like when we have lived our lives to full maturity and have acquired those virtues that God wants us to have. And let's face it: some of the strongest virtues we develop come through struggle and trials. As scouts, you know that. It is also true in our Christian lives.

To accept this message requires patience. But remember: we can be patient because God has first been patient with us. He gives us time to mature. He accepts that we make mistakes and commit sins, but he is always there to forgive us when turn to him in repentance. If we have benefitted from God's patience, then we should extend that same patience to others. Parents can be patient with their children, and children with their parents. Siblings can be patient with one another. And here in these days of jamboree: just as we have the opportunity to practice kindness, so too, we have many chances to be patient with one another, and with the circumstances that arise.

In living these virtues like Jesus did, we show that we really are becoming more and more the children of God. Not only are we being good scouts, but we are learning to live the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.