



World Organization of the Scout Movement  
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout



# 12

## Religion: men and women of peace

**THEME:** This workshop is designed to help the participants reflect about their personal development, about the role that Scouting principles play in that respect, and about the place that religion occupies in their lives – all under the central theme of this kit, the Culture of Peace. For the participants, are those ideas a set of scattered, incoherent notions or an integrated whole?

**DURATION:** 2 hours (up to 2 1/2 hours)

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** up to 40

**STAFF REQUIRED:** 3 leaders, ideally from three different countries and three different religious denominations.

### BACKGROUND

Scouting aims at the full development of young people according to an original educational scheme and a unique method. This full development includes the main dimensions of the personality: physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual.

As far as spiritual development is concerned, while making full use of the extraordinary strength of the Scout method to promote and enrich the spiritual dimension in young people, Scouting co-operates actively with the main religions and spiritualities of our time, whose objectives go along the same lines.





This workshop can be considered from three angles: that of using the lives of exemplary men and women as a source of inspiration for young people, that of exploring the values to which such great men and women adhere, and, finally, that of considering the symbols that play a driving role in individual and collective imagery. Along the way (starting with the introduction), the participants will reflect on personal growth and on the role that Scouting principles play in this field, and they will be invited to use the wealth of wisdom provided by religions to enrich their own lives.

The connection with the Culture of Peace could not be more explicit. Whether inner peace, peaceful interpersonal relations, intercultural peace, peace between man and nature, or relations between justice and peace, each of these dimensions is closely associated with both personal values and collective action (social life). Each dimension has a contribution to make, and each interpenetrates with the rest.

It should be noted that the major religions, apart from their role as paths towards transcendence, also have an important ethical, environmental and social role to play.

One objection is, however, often raised, which is that religion can also be a source of violence. This can be seen between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians, and so on. However, it should also be noted that in most cases, it is more a question of the "religious" label being cast as a key element of cultural identity. In other words, groups which are fighting for power and for control of social space cling to religion as a distinctive element of their identity, i.e. of their thirst for recognition. The religions themselves have no hand in such matters; at most, they serve as a pretext or alibi.

**KEY MESSAGES**

- For the development of young people, the lives of exemplary men and women can serve as a source of inspiration.
- The wars that have punctuated the history of mankind have produced many "heroes". It is high time that peace produced its own heroes: humble and silent, they can illuminate our lives.
- Thought should be given to the integrationist nature of Scouting principles and of the Culture of Peace concept in terms of all our values.
- If peace and non-violence guide our lives, tolerance, understanding, justice and sharing will be the natural consequences.



### PURPOSE/AIMS /OBJECTIVES

- To remind ourselves of the ideals we profess in Scouting, summarised in the principles: Duty to God, Duty to Others and Duty to Self.
- To realise that personal development fulfils at the same time our duty to ourselves, to others and to God.
- To examine the central role that religion can play in our lives and in the development of our personality.
- To make the link between all the above and the Culture of Peace as an integrationist element in our lives.
- To be aware of the fact that values are a key element in our attitudes and behaviour: we should adhere to them not only in words but also in deeds if we are going to live an authentic life.
- To share all the above with others and express it through a variety of symbols.

### METHOD AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTIVITY

#### Preparation

- "A Modern Parable" (see Annex) should be prepared with the three participants who are going to read it out in the form of a dialogue.
- For the second part of the small-group work, flip-chart paper (or similar), felt pens of different colours, scissors, glue, etc. should be prepared.



**Implementation**

*Plenary session*

**1. Introduction**

The leader welcomes the participants and invites them to concentrate on the theme of the workshop. To put it in perspective, he asks the three selected participants to read out, in the form of a dialogue, "A Modern Parable".

Any spontaneous comments would be welcome after the parable has been read out. If no comments are forthcoming, the leader emphasises that the parable illustrates very well the growth angle of personal development.

*Duration: 10- 15 minutes*

**2. Man/woman of peace**

To get to the heart of the subject, the leader invites the participants to divide into small groups and to choose someone who, in their eyes, incarnates or stands for values of peace. They can be called a man/woman of peace.

To give you some ideas, we can suggest individuals who have personified, at different times, in different countries and different social contexts, ideals of peace, non-violence, tolerance and reconciliation among men.

People like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Mons. Oscar Romero and many others spring at once to mind, but the participants should feel free to make their own choice.

*Small-group activity*

In small groups, take time to choose a "man or woman of peace." Then use the following questions to prompt discussion:

- Why did you choose this person?
- What are the main characteristics/values of the person you have chosen?
- How did/have they embody/ied these characteristics/values in their daily lives?
- Were there/have there been exceptional moments when they had to make important decisions/choices? How did they go about it? What did they decide/choose? What values lay beneath that choice/decision?
- From what religion/spirituality did/have they extract/ed those values?
- What connection do you see with the three key Scouting principles laid down in the Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement: Duty to God, Duty to Others, and Duty to Self?
- And you, in your daily life, how does this example inspire you?



### *Plenary session*

#### **3. Pooling the choices**

In turn, the groups present the personalities they have chosen, their principal values and the source of inspiration that they represent.

At the end of the presentation, the leader – basing himself on the different points mentioned – can underline some of the common characteristics:

- They are people of different religions but who are/were all attached to peace and tolerance.
- The radical nature of their choice of life (Gandhi, for example). In general, it is not a matter of heroic deeds but of a permanent feature of their lives, of living day after day with their convictions.
- Humility: They do/did not see themselves as “great” men or women, they do/did not seek to be amongst the top or to be honoured.
- They are/were gripped by a passion; they are/were not half-hearted, and they possess/possessed an inner strength that pushes/drives/drove them into action.

*Duration: 20 minutes*

### *Small-group activity*

#### **4. Symbols**

Still in plenary session, the leader explains the second part of the workshop. He asks the participants to *choose a symbol which represents a consensus in terms of the values mentioned in the group.*

For example: One participant has chosen a figure who personifies inner beauty; another highlighted joy; another chose someone who was a symbol of reconciliation, etc. After a short discussion, the group realises that a rainbow symbolises all these values.

*Duration: 15 minutes*



Plenary session

### 5. Preparation of the symbol

Once the symbol has been chosen, time then has to be spent preparing it in as creative a way as possible (drawing, collage, living statue (fixed mime), etc). The group is provided with the necessary material (see Preparation, above).

NB: In an intercultural group, care should be taken to draw attention to the different ways in which symbols may be perceived in different cultures. For example, for some the sun might represent a source of light, i.e. a "positive" symbol, while for others, it might represent a source of heat that crushes and burns, i.e. a "negative" symbol.

Duration: 40 minutes

### 6. Report

The groups make brief reports. Each group presents:

- The possible symbols discussed by the group and their connection with peace.
- The collective symbol that the group has chosen. They show it to all the participants and explain why they chose it and what it represents for them.

Duration: 15 minutes

### 7. Conclusion

A song to do with peace could close the workshop, for example, "Kumbayah", which is strongly rooted in the Scout tradition.

### REMARKS TO LEADERS

The workshop requires careful preparation, the more so since leaders of several countries and several denominations are involved in running it.

Some specific remarks:

- When talking about peace and non-violence, care must be taken not to present them as "passive" concepts, when they are in fact eminently active. What the great examples discussed during this workshop have tried to do in their lives is to instil dynamics of peace in the life of mankind. It is essentially a question of dynamics of change: achieving greater justice, more love and reconciliation embedded in social structures.
- If the leaders do not have special training in this field, some readings on what symbols represent, symbolism, and their importance in different cultures could be helpful.
- One question often crops up regarding peace in a given society: How can one live with people who have values that are very different from our own? Beyond selective answers on one subject or another, answering this question opens up considerations on pluralism. We have touched on this subject in Workshops 4 and 10, but it is a vast area which cannot be dealt with adequately within the confines of this workshop.

## SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

- Some of the activities in this workshop can be used for spiritual sessions or activities, for example, "A Modern Parable", the work on symbols, etc.
- Always be on the lookout for possible sources of activities. For instance, select the slogan "If we can sing together, we can also live together". It is the translation of a song composed by gypsy children at an MwB music workshop in Skopje, in Summer 2000. (ref. 2)
- If you are not yet fully conversant with the philosophical and religious foundations of non-violence and its diverse ways of operation in different contexts, you could follow a course or a training seminar on the subject. Enquire about concrete possibilities in your country.
- One should not shirk from inviting young people to use the wealth of wisdom provided by religions to enrich their personal lives. It does not have to be long or boring; all it takes is a carefully chosen saying from the Bible, the Koran, the Dhammapada (sayings of Buddha), etc. or even a quotation from a poet like Tagore "a realisation of the plenitude of life through its transformation by beauty". (ref. 3)

## SOURCES

- "A Modern Parable" is taken from "15 Development Education Games for Scouts", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1988.
- To develop the Background explanations, see, in particular, the booklets "The Essential Characteristics of Scouting" and "Scouting and Spiritual Development", published by the World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1998 and 2001.

## REFERENCES

1. *Scouting and Spiritual Development*, World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 2001.
2. *Magazine International Reconciliation*, published by IFOR, The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, No. 1, 2001, p. 16.
3. "Dictionnaire des Religions" (sous la direction de Paul Poupard, P.U.F., Paris, 1993, p. 1962). (Translation our own.)





### A MODERN PARABLE

Long ago, when the world was very new... there was a certain lobster who determined that the Creator had made a mistake. So he set up an appointment to discuss the matter.

*"With all due respect," said the lobster, "I wish to complain about the way you designed my shell. You see, I just get used to one outer casing, when I've got to shed it for another. Very inconvenient and rather a waste of time."*

To which the Creator replied, *"I see. But do you realise that it is the giving up of one shell that allows you to grow into another?"*

*"But I like myself just the way I am," the lobster said.*

*"Your mind's made up?" the Creator asked.*

*"Indeed!" the lobster stated firmly.*

*"Very well," smiled the Creator. "From now on, your shell will not change... and you may go about your business just as you are right now."*

*"That's very kind of you," said the lobster, and left.*

*At first, the lobster was very content wearing the same old shell. But as time passed, he found that his once light and comfortable shell was becoming quite heavy and tight.*

*After a while, in fact, the shell became so cumbersome that the lobster couldn't feel anything at all outside himself. As a result, he was constantly bumping into others.*

*Finally, it got to the point where he could hardly even breathe. So with great effort, he went back to see the Creator.*

*"While all due respect," the lobster sighed, "contrary to what you promised, my shell has not remained the same. It keeps shrinking!"*

*"Not at all," smiled the Creator. "Your shell may have gotten a little thicker with age, but it has remained the same size. What's happened is that you have changed – inside, beneath your shell."*

*The Creator continued: "You see, everything changes... continuously. No one remains the same. That's the way I've designed things. And the wisest choice is to shed your old shell as you grow."*

*"I see," said the lobster, "but you must admit it is occasionally inconvenient and a bit uncomfortable."*

*"Yes," said the Creator, "but remember, all growth carried with it both the possibility of discomfort... and the potential for great joy, as you discover new parts of yourself. After all, you can't have one without the other."*

*"That's very sensible," said the lobster.*

*"If you'd like," offered the Creator, "I'll tell you something more."*

*"Please do," encouraged the lobster.*

*"When you let go of your shell and choose to grow," said the Creator, "you build new strength within yourself. And in that strength, you'll find new capacity to love yourself... to love those around you... and to love life itself. This is my plan for each of you."*



# Annex

Source: Network letter CCPD No. 16, October 1982