

WORLD SCIENTIFIC CONGRESS: “EDUCATION AND THE WORLD SCOUT
MOVEMENT: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES”

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**“EDUCATION TO PEACE AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE:
EXPERIENCES”**

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INTRODUCTION

World events have reported a plethora of scenes of religious violence, and blood conflicts. In *No Exit* (1948), Sartre shows how other persons are treats to freedom and human existence. In his well-known expression, “Other people are hell”, he expresses his fear that others have the potential to annihilate our personal freedom and authentic existence. This is the dreadful reality of Apartheid, the Rwanda genocide, the violent and bloody conflict that sometimes may occur between believers of different cultures, race, or faith communities. People can be heirs to a long history of mutual contempt among religions and religious denominations, of religious coercion, strife and persecution.

The reality of the inter-subjective “I-you” relationship, in the light of different faith communities, as each one sustains and nourishes its religious creeds, is a point of interest for education to peace and interreligious dialogue. “There will be no peace in the world until there is peace among the religions and there will be no peace among the religions until there is dialogue among the religions (Hans Kung and the Parliament of the World’s Religions). On what basis do we people of different faith commitments meet one another? How can we find a common basis for communication and cooperation on matters relevant to our moral and spiritual concern in spite of disagreement and differences? How can religion assume its real function in the achievement of personal wholeness and social coherence (1)?

The search for a common ground to maintain our existence requires a new spirit and a new vision, for “Where there is no vision, people perish”, says the wise of the

Book of Proverbs. The words of M L King remind us “the world is changing and anyone who thinks he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. We must learn to live together as brothers or will perish together as fools” (2). Therefore, we shall understand education to peace among Scouts of different faith communities as a learning and educational process to transmit and nurture an amount of values and attitudes through a series of experiences in order to build a world of peaceful coexistence.

I would like in this presentation to give a summary of practices or module activities that the Scout Group sponsored by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Center of Hsinchu Diocese, proposed to the National Interreligious Dialogue Committee of The Boy Scout of China/Taiwan.

SUMMARY OF PRACTICES SCOUT EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

1- MODULE PROGRAM - ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP

- a. Activity and target group: organizing worship together with the other Christian churches under the leadership and animation of Scouts.
- b. Educational Purpose: The aim of the activity is to bring scouts and young people from different Christian denominations into prayer and fellowship to witness to Christian faith and foster spiritual dimension.
- c. Frequency: Once a year (Christian Unity Week)

2- MODULE PROGRAM -LIGHTENING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

- a. Type of Activity: Lightening the Christmas tree in front of the City Government; gathers Catholics, Protestants, Buddhist, Taoists, and the Mayor of the City Government and group representative to organize a prayer service for peace, hope, and life. This is expressed through drama, songs, and prayers, followed by the lightening of the Christmas Tree by different religious and civil leaders.
- b. Educational purpose: This activity is meant to bring closer Christians from different denominations as well as Buddhists and Taoists; to develop attitude of openness, tolerance; to share the same anxieties, express the same social problems and challenges in prayer.
- c. Frequency: once in a year, in December. It will take place this year on December

15.

3- MODULE PROGRAM - GET TOGETHER

- a. Type of Activity and target group: Organizing outdoor activities – picnic, cycling, BB, sightseeing, hiking, swimming... Those binding activities are meant for young people and young religious leaders from different faith communities: Buddhists, Taoists, Protestants, and Christians.
- b. Educational purpose: The activity is intended to create and develop the spirit of friendship and camaraderie among young people of different faith communities, to learn to be and live with others.
- c. Activity Procedure: a. Follow the educational process for spiritual development (see under).

4- MODULE PROGRAM - INTERFAITH CEREMONY FOR PEACE

- a. Activity & target group: organizing a workshop on Peace among Religions followed by an interreligious ceremony prayer for peace during the Chinese New Year, through drama, songs, cultural dance.... The target group will be Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, and non-believers as well as the local authority.
- b. Educational purpose: The activity is intended to bring believers from different profession of faiths at the threshold of a new year to pray for peace and harmony, for prosperity and a better future, considering the animal that marks the Chinese lunar calendar. This ceremony will help believers to begin spiritually a new year and strengthen brotherhood spirit between them.

5- MODULE PROGRAM - FAITH DISCOVERY

a. Nature of activity:

- Organizing a competition of a compilation of religious and sacred texts reflecting values, thoughts, or wisdom of a faith community
- Organizing a competition of PowerPoint presentation of rituals, festivals or religious ceremonies

- Participants will work in small teams of 3 people.
- Teams will have an experience of a particular faith community except their own in order to:
 - ◆ explore the expression and beliefs of a particular faith community
 - ◆ build up relationship with people
 - ◆ Participate in their activities
 - ◆ Offer a community service
 - ◆ collect data of religious texts, festivals etc...
- Awards will be given to the first 3 best teams in a ceremony that gathers all participants, scout groups, religious leaders of different faith communities and representatives of the City Government.

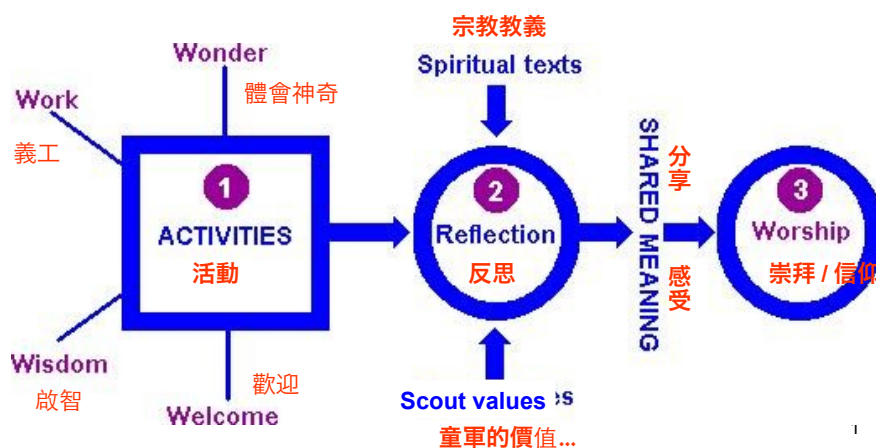
b. Educational purpose and objectives:

Educating young people of different faith communities to develop and nurture a spirit and attitudes of openness, tolerance, respect, appreciation, and mutual enrichment.

The publication of a compilation of religious and sacred texts, based on the model of “Explorer of the Invisible” can be used during scout activities for an in depth sharing of spiritual meaning among scouts of different faith communities.

IN DEPTH SHARING THROUGH A PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Dominique Benard and Gualtiero Zanolini proposed method with the 5W Activity of UK Scout Association



Understanding the process of dialogue in depth:

1. Experiencing activities (skills and capabilities) that are spiritually significant. This presupposes awareness and sensibilities.
2. Reflecting on the experience provided by these activities in order to discover and share a spiritual meaning.
3. Relate this spiritual meaning with our religious and sacred texts borrowed from different spiritual heritages and celebrate it collectively, in order to foster internalization and personal commitment.

During this process, there is a dialogue in depth that takes place. The willingness to work together with scouts from other faith communities, and the acceptance to reflect on one's own experiences in the light of religious texts borrowed from different spiritual traditions, are efforts that lead to peace and to mutual edification. As Paul said, "I want us to help each other with the faith we have. Your faith will help me, and my faith will help you" (Romans 1:12). The above process of spiritual development, as experienced in World Jamborees and Moots and through a series of activities, can help young people, within the limit of their religious freedom, to appropriate in depth the spiritual intuitions of the other beyond one's own creeds and ideas. For a fruitful dialogue, it's necessary that one's reaches in the very depth of oneself to the experience of the other who may not be of the same faith. For, in terms of Baden Powell, "there is in every human individual the germ of love, the 'bit of God' as the soul has been termed" (3), "God is love working around and within each one" (4). Following the terms of Baden Powell, we can say the process opens a pathway to

peace, mutual edification, and fruitful dialogue.

6- MODULE PROGRAM - I-YES CAMP (Youth Encounter Seminar Camp)

a. Nature of activity:

Organizing 7 days camping (Week of Scout Brotherhood/WSB) for young scouts (Catholics, Protestants, Muslim, Buddhists, Taoists) in Hsinchu Province.

It takes place once a year, during Summer.

This WSB is a development and adaptation of the educational programs & experiences lived in Jamborees and Moots

This WSB consists in:

1. organizing community service
2. providing young people with competitive cultural activities
(e.g.: dance, pantomime, drama, song...) and Olympic Games/ outdoor activities
(e.g.: basket ball, racing, ping pong, hiking, swimming, climbing, cycling...)
3. organizing workshop on some ethical or social issues (e.g.: abortion, suicide, broken families, corruption & exploitation, The Migrant Workers, the Aboriginal minorities...) in the light of different spiritual heritages and the Scout Law in order to seek a common path to action
4. Each faith community providing young people with activities and offering opportunities for spiritual development

b. Educational Purpose and objectives: The activity aims at building friendship and fellowship among Scouts and young people of different faith communities. In so doing, it creates opportunity for young people to come together and make friends, to deepen their faith and discover the spiritual heritage of others, share their experiences and explore the possibilities of organizing joint community or social services in favor of the needy (...).

a. Leadership support: the leaders will help:

- ◇ To explore a joint social or humanitarian activity
- ◇ To identify the young people concepts, principles, and point of views that may determine and justify stereotype behavior or attitude towards the ethical or social issue at the heart of the activity
- ◇ To assess the quality of information and knowledge of young people and the

need of right information and formation that may lead to a change of concept and attitude - with the assistance of experts and spiritually knowledgeable people.

- ◇ To gain spiritual understanding of the topic through sacred texts, taken from different religious traditions
- ◇ To build activity teams composed with scouts from different faith communities
- ◇ To develop communication, openness, tolerance, understanding, respect and mutual acceptance between people of different faith communities
- ◇ To discover what is truthful, valuable and noble in other faiths.

7- MODULE PROGRAM - "HAND FOR LIFE"

- a. Activity and target group: Organizing along with other believers from other faith communities some joint humanitarian or social activities or projects aimed at responding to the needs of aborigines, assisting the destitute, the victims of Typhoons, Tsunamis, or earthquakes, or any other natural disaster or calamity.
- b. Educational purpose: the activity is meant to bring scouts of different religious confessions to witness to the values of compassion, care, and solidarity by creating better living conditions for the weak, the poor, the less privileged, and the misfortune.
- c. Educational Outcomes: develop sensitivity to others' misfortune, develop spirit of voluntary service and sacrifice for the good of others, spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

"Learning to know" that is the hallmark of school as formal education system is not enough in term of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge has to be accompanied by "learning to do", "learning to be", and "learning to live with others". Considering the above-mentioned set of experiences, we can draw some aspects of education to peace and interreligious dialogue:

- We honestly and profoundly disagree in matters of creed and dogma, which lie at the heart of our religious existence. We say "no" to one another in some doctrines essential and sacred to us. But the experience of the above-mentioned program proves that across the chasm, we scouts can extend our hands to one another. Both communication and separation are necessary. We must preserve

our individuality as well as foster care for one another, tolerance, appreciation, reverence, understanding, and cooperation.

- We develop dialogue through activities, experiences, and social projects. The set of module activities is a way to educate to peace and dialogue among different religions present within Scouting. It makes possible and effective a convergence of some of our commitments, of some of our views, tasks we have in common, evils we must fight together, goals and responsibility we share, and a predicament afflicting all of us (5). Young Scouts come to discover common ethical concerns and effective paths to action. We experience encounter as human liberation.
- The scout program helps to implement "The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief." ; to allow all religions to manifest their own identity publicly (respect of religious liberty); to understand religion as a herald of peace and harmony, service and solidarity.

REFERENCES

(1) *Royal Rue, "Religion is Not About God", Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ and London, 2005, p.160)*

(2. (John Okwoeze, *Martin Luther King Jr.: His Life and Message* (Enugu: Snaap Press Limited, 1995), p.102)).

(3) Paper read at the New York Conference, magazine Jamboree, July 1928.

Cf Scouting and Spiritual Development, references 160

(4) Baden Powell, "Religion in the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Movement", an address by the Chief Scout to the Joint Conference of Commissioners of both Movements at High Leigh, 2 July 1926, p.8.

Cf Scouting and Spiritual Development, references 153

(5) Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island" in *Christianity Through non-Christian Eyes*, Paul J.Griffith (ed), (maryknoll, New York© Orbis Books, pp.29-39.

SUMMARY

World events have reported a plethora of scenes of religious violence, and blood conflicts. In *No Exit* (1948), Sartre shows how other persons are treats to freedom and human existence. In his well-known expression, “Other people are hell”, he expresses his fear that others have the potential to annihilate our personal freedom and authentic existence. This is the dreadful reality of Apartheid, the Rwanda genocide, the *Shari a* law crisis in Nigeria, the violent and bloody conflict that sometimes may occur between believers of different cultures, race, or faith communities. People can be heirs to a long history of mutual contempt among religions and religious denominations, of religious coercion, strife and persecution.

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