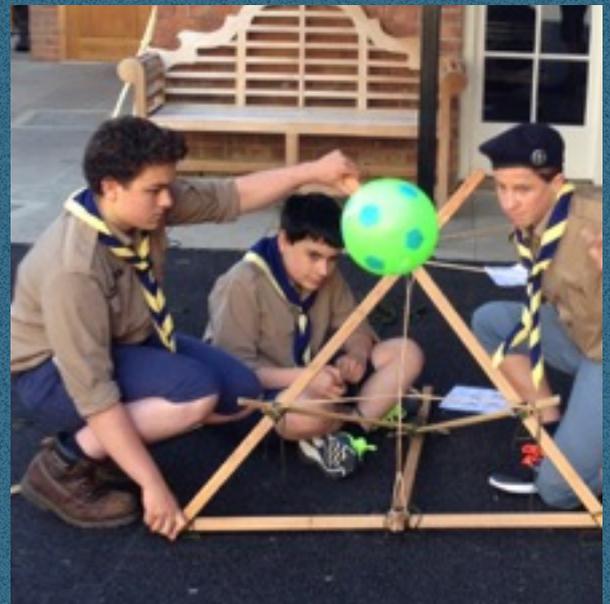


CATHOLIC SCOUTING AT THE OXFORD ORATORY



1ST OXFORD FSE SCOUT TROOP OF ST PHILIP NERI

SCOUTS OF EUROPE

Why scouting?

When Robert Baden-Powell published 'Scouting for Boys' in 1908, he didn't expect it to become an international best-seller, second in sales only to the Bible in the last century. In it, he mapped out his idea for transforming society: get the young people into groups, teach them some practical skills and send them outside! His vision of scouting was youth-based — the scouts plan what they want to learn and do, the only requirement being that they all perform a good turn for someone else each day.

Scouting spread quickly around the world. A French Jesuit priest, Fr Jacques Sevin saw the potential in scouting for teaching young people not only useful skills for this life, but also the way to the next. He adapted Baden-Powell's original idea to include the Catholic faith as an integral, natural part of the system. Baden-Powell greatly approved of his work — he said that no one else had really understood his ideas as well as Sevin.

The *International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe* (uigse-fse.org) is one of the successors to the groups set up in France by Fr Jacques Sevin, with branches in seventeen European countries, and in North America (where it is called the *Federation of North American Explorers*), and is the largest Catholic scouting body approved by the Church. In 2015, Catholic scouting spread to the UK, and our parish became the first in England to have a group of Scouts of Europe.

A year on, and it seems to be working! The success of the group so far shows that there is a demand for this kind of scouting here in Oxford, so now we're inviting more people to join in the adventure. At the moment, we have a scout troop for ages 11–17, and we would like to start the Wolf Cub and Rover branches of the movement for ages below and above this.

Why Catholic scouting?

The Scouting Association, which is the group set up by Baden-Powell in this country, continues to do great work. And as the Scout Law says, a true scout is a brother to every other scout. But there is a difference between being a Catholic in scouting, and being a Catholic scout. Just like other scouting movements, we aim to help a young person develop in the following four areas: physical health, practical skills, character and personality, and service to neighbour. Progress in these four areas leads naturally to a fifth: the relationship with God. By building up an appreciation of God's creation, training in virtue and serving others, the scout grows closer to God almost without realising. Of course, we also include prayer and the Sacraments along the way to strengthen the work.

What do you actually do?

The group runs on a yearly cycle, culminating in the summer camp. When we begin in September, the group starts planning for the next summer camp. Fortnightly meetings leading up to the summer are all about learning skills that will be needed on camp, as well as having fun! Some of the skills and activities we have done in the past year include:

- archery
- building a camp fire
- cooking outdoors
- woodcraft
- knot-tying
- capture the flag
- obstacle courses
- constructing shelters
- tracking
- map reading
- building a catapult

The scouts also do their best to raise funds themselves to pay for the equipment needed for activities. They've sold cakes, Christmas cards, homemade rosaries and washed bikes to cover the cost of all the activities so far this year.

Looking forward to the summer camp each year gives the scouts focus, and teaches them about setting goals and putting in the work to get there. This isn't just something that will be useful in adult life; it is precisely the way we as Christians should look forward to heaven.

When do you meet?

Meetings take place fortnightly on a Saturday afternoon and last for two hours. There are occasional extra events like parties, campfires and Masses at other times in the year. It's not a big commitment in terms of time, but the scouting doesn't stop when they get home. Scouting is a whole attitude to life, and one that we hope will continue for a lifetime.

Meetings start and finish at the Oxford Oratory.

If your son might be interested in coming to a meeting to give scouting a try, please contact Br Oliver Craddock (who runs the group) at:
fse.oxford@gmail.com