



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

National Scout Service

Bishop Richard Moth's Sermon

29 APRIL 2012, ST GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR

This is a special day for everyone here in this chapel, it is a wonderful gathering, a real celebration of Scouting and the very significant relationship that exists between the members of the Scout Movement and Her Majesty – celebrated in a special way in this, Her Majesty's Jubilee Year.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate all those who are St. George's Day Award recipients – it is to you and to your fellow scouts that I now speak.

We have seen some arrows in this amazing chapel. Arrows speak to us of journey – it might be the arrow speeding through the air on its way to the target, the arrow that we see on the road signs by alongside our roads. Some of us may even remember the "Golden Arrow" train, rushing along the track to its destination.

Arrows point the way – and we are all on a journey. We have all travelled to be here today. We spend our lives going from one place to another, seemingly in an ever-increasing rush under the pressures of life. When I travel on trains or walk through the streets of London, I see so many people rushing about and I often wonder "Where are they going?"

When I ask myself that question, I do not think of where they are going at that moment – but where are they going in the long term. Where to do travel on life's journey? What indications, what arrows, to we follow on that path?

The Bible contains many accounts of people on journeys – Abraham journeying to the promised land, Moses and the people of Israel leaving Egypt, The Jewish people at the time of the exile leaving their beloved homeland – and then returning again many years later. In the New Testament, we find Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem. We find Jesus walking around the country teaching and healing. Then we find him travelling to Jerusalem where he will die and rise from the dead. Later, in the Acts of the Apostles, everything is about journeys again – this time the journeys taken by the Apostles as they bring the Gospel message to the world. Everyone is on the move.

It is the same for us – and the arrows of today's service are all about that journey. We reflect on the way that has brought us to today. Not just to this chapel, but to this point in our lives. We think of family and friends, those who have influenced us in life – perhaps teachers and the people we respect, the difficult experiences that have formed us too, and – of course – our lives as Scouts, the special experiences we have enjoyed as members of this very special organisation, the things we have learned, the skills we have acquired. We bring all these things with us on the journey. We begin our journey with a rucksack that has little in it – but as we travel along, all these experiences and encounters with people begin to fill the rucksack. Sometimes we have to find a bigger one to get everything in!

Once in a while, it is good to stop and reflect for a bit. We step off the road and check map and compass. We remember where we have been and we look for the path ahead. We take our bearings. We look for new signs and we continue on the journey.

Sometimes, the path we are called to take will be something of a surprise, the arrows giving us direction may point to unexpected places. All this is part of life's journey and the experience we have, the things we learn, the skills we acquire – more importantly, the people we meet – form us to become the people we are meant to be.

This chapel, in which we have stepped aside from the journey for a few moments, reminds us that our journey of life is also a pilgrimage – a sacred journey. Each one of us is called by God to do something that only we can do. This will be our particular contribution to the world in which we live – and those of you who have given so much of your lives to Scouting are giving something very significant to society. For others in this chapel today, the discovery is at an earlier stage – but that discovery of who we really are and what it is that we are called to do in life is ultimately the discovery of what God wills for us and when we make that discover – when we follow the arrows along that path – we come to know who we really are and we find real fulfilment in our lives.

For us, as Scouts that fulfilment surely lies in Service – Service as expressed in the Scout Promise, that we shall renew today - duty to God and the Queen and in helping others. This is a wonderful direction to take, a sure arrow on our journey of life. My prayer for each one here today is that together we may continue on that path of service, finding meaning and fulfilment on the journey of life together, a life lived with real direction in the service of others, that we become the people God calls us to be. It is following these arrows that will bring us truly to life.

Rt Rev Richard Moth
Bishop for Scouts
Catholic Bishop of the Forces