



SCOUT ASSOCIATION THANKSGIVING SERVICE

“THANKS FOR THE SCOUTING MOVEMENT AND TO LORD BADEN-POWELL”

6 September 2002, 7.30 pm

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Woolloongabba

The Hon P de Jersey AC Chief Justice

The founder of the Scouting movement, Lord Baden-Powell, would certainly have approved of our gathering here this evening. A “jamboree” of divergent ages, backgrounds and personalities, but united in solidarity under the common motto - “be prepared”. “Be prepared for what?” someone once asked Baden-Powell. “Why, for any old thing”, replied the Chief Scout of the World. What did Baden-Powell mean by that? Being prepared for emergencies is one obvious response, but that was not all he meant to convey.

Baden-Powell believed all Scouts should prepare themselves to become productive citizens and dedicate themselves to inspiring happiness in others. He wanted to ensure each Scout would be ready in mind, body and spirit for any struggles which lay ahead. He wanted every Scout to meet head on all challenges life may produce, and to use the heart to guide one to do the right thing.

In short, Baden-Powell considered all Scouts should be prepared for life - to live happily and without regret, knowing that one has done one’s best. It is here this evening that we give thanks for Lord Baden-Powell, for his wisdom and in particular, his contribution to the Scouting movement worldwide. We also give thanks for the enormous and positive contribution Scouts have made since the movement’s inception in 1908, and especially the Queensland Scouting movement, of which I was myself once a proud member. Perhaps

we might suggest this evening the Scouting motto of “be prepared” also encompass the sentiment “be thankful”.

Lord Baden-Powell was undoubtedly a Renaissance man – well read, well published (as many as 42 books during his life time together with many pamphlets and articles), an artist and sculptor, an adventurer, observant, intelligent, resourceful, encouraging and of abundant integrity. These words of advice to a boys’ club in London illustrate his life’s philosophy, as poignant today as when written almost 100 years ago:

“You should not be content with sitting down to defend yourselves against evil habits, but should also be active in doing good. By “doing good” I mean making yourselves useful and doing small kindnesses to other people – whether they are friends or strangers”.

“It does not matter how small the “good turn” may be – even if it is only to help an old woman across the street, or to say a good word for somebody who is being badly spoken of. The great thing is to do something.”

The Australian adage of “having a go” is what Baden-Powell was encouraging Scouts to do. Don’t just sit there and watch life pass you by. Be active and positive. But do not expect monetary rewards for your “good turns”. You may actually find the consequence of your “good turn” reaches much further than any monetary gain. Let me illustrate. In 1909, an American publisher lost himself in fog. A boy approached and offered assistance. The gentleman said where he wanted to go and the boy showed him the way. When offered a tip for his assistance, the boy refused, saying “a Scout does not accept tips for doing his good turn”. The gentleman asked what he meant. The boy replied, “I am a Scout. Haven’t you heard of the Boy Scouts? Wouldn’t you like to know more about them”? The gentleman did, and was so impressed he started the Scouting movement in the United States!

Our founder would have been gratified by the Queensland Branch's pro-active, up-front approach to the vexing issue of child protection, its initiatives anticipating the State's "suitability card" system. Justice Williams last week showed me your excellent recent publication, "Protecting your children, a parent's guide": a perceptive booklet of great potential value to all parents. Above all, it is a practical guide, of abundant value in a context where one in 170 Australian children under nine years of age is confirmed as a victim of abuse and neglect. I commend the booklet to the whole community, and congratulate the author Mr Warwick Bateman, and Scouts Australia upon a most worthwhile production. A little later I will utter the magic word, "launch"!

I fondly recall my own boyhood experiences of scouting. I remember the excitement of our meetings and camps. I still nostalgically retain my Scout's belt. I have wondered whether our "bob-a-job" drives, which early on instilled a sense of dedication and purpose, would, given the present rate of inflation, now be so described!

Like all of us here tonight, Lord Baden-Powell was not perfect: he also had to learn from mistakes. One of his most noted lapses of observation (and contrary to one of his own tenets of scouting) occurred in 1907, at the first Scout Camp in Poole Harbour on Brownsea Island, Dorset. He was stalking a patrol but failed to observe one of his own rules – to "look up". His nephew, concealed in the branches of a tree, captured him!

Another of Baden-Powell's exemplary traits was the productive use of spare time. Apart from stalking his masters at school, and catching and cooking rabbits while trying to avoid detection, Baden-Powell's childhood adventures with his brothers involved tracing the Thames to its source – by canoe! Indeed, every minute of Baden-Powell's life has been described as "sixty seconds worth of distance run".

As we gather to celebrate and give thanks for the life of Lord Baden-Powell and the enormous contribution the movement has made world-wide, we recall also that the Scouting movement encourages its members to acknowledge a commitment to God, while not harnessing the Scouting credo to any particular denominational tie. In the spirit of equality, teamwork and tolerance, the hallmarks of the Scouting movement, and one would hope all society, foster belief and dependence in a divine creator, whatever his or her particular manifestation.

May I conclude with part of the then aged Lord Baden-Powell's farewell message to the movement:

"I believe that God put us in this jolly world to be happy and enjoy life. Happiness does not come from being rich, nor merely being successful in your career, nor by self-indulgence....

Nature study will show you what beautiful and wonderful things God has made in the world for you to enjoy. Be contented with what you have got and make the best of it. Look on the bright side of things instead of the gloomy one.

But the real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people. Try and leave this world a little better than you found it and when your turn comes to die, you can die happy in feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have done your best. "Be Prepared" in this way, to live happy and die happy – stick to your Scout Promise always...- and God help you to do it."

Let us give thanks to God, for Lord Baden-Powell and the Scouting movement worldwide: let us be both thankful, and prepared!