

# **One World One Promise – The promise and Law of 500 million Scouts**

**compiled by Robert Lynn Horne**

## **PREFACE**

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July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965, the last day of my first summer camp. At sunset, the troop was aligned in a perfect square on the shore of Lake Bolsena in Italy. In front of the troop leader, with my left hand on the Scout flag and my right hand raised in the Scout salute, I pronounced those words that would make me a Scout: “On my honour, I promise...”

Since August 1<sup>st</sup> 1907, when Robert Baden-Powell – BP – and 20 boys from very different socio-economic backgrounds hoisted the flag on the first Scout camp ever, several hundred millions of young people, girls and boys, women and men, throughout the world have engaged with the same commitment, on their honour, to do their best, to do their duties to God and to their country, to help others at all times and to obey the Scout law. The Scout Promise and Law represent the pillar of Scouting and the very special day that a Scout pronounces her/his promise remains indelible in her/his memory.

That day he or she becomes part of an ever growing family united by the same commitment “to leave the world a little better that they found it”, as BP wrote to all of us in his last message. Overcoming the barriers deriving from their personal and national history, culture, skin colour, religion, social class, physical and mental capacity or any other difference, Scouts recognise themselves as part of the same worldwide brotherhood and sisterhood: “One World, One Promise”.

Nevertheless, while the universal principles of the Promise and the Law to which Scouts solemnly adhere are the same worldwide, besides translation into local language, the wording of both has been often adapted according to context and culture, so ensuring that anywhere Scouts may take the commitment with full understanding and consciousness of the responsibility which goes with it.

Thanks to the brilliant initiative of Robert Lynn Horne, executive director of the Las Vegas International Scouting Museum, and the collaboration between that organization and the World Scout Bureau,<sup>1</sup> the existing variations of the texts of the Scout Promise and Law as adopted throughout a great number of National Scout Organizations have been collected, translated into English and organised in the present volume. This offers the possibility of direct reference and comparison. It may also stimulate further analysis of the style and wording used in the different contexts to verify if they are appropriate for today's generations, while remaining coherent to the original principles proposed by the Founder.

In fact, a purely ritual Promise made using language and wording alien to today's youth may remain distant to them and be experienced as a pure formality. Only a deep, convinced commitment, repeatedly renewed during the time spent in active Scouting, will change a young woman or man into a real Scout, influencing her/his life style and lifelong engagement to serve her/his community and “helping others at all times”.

Through participating in World Jamborees and other international Scout gatherings, we can appreciate the enormous diversity which characterises our Movement and the richness it represents.

<sup>1</sup> The World Scout Bureau is the Secretariat of the World Organization of the Scout Movement

All different, but all equal through the same commitment and value framework, Scouts recognise themselves as sisters and brothers and learn to break all socio-cultural barriers and open their hearts and minds to all human beings, whatever their condition. Reading through the different versions of the Promise and Law, undoubtedly the common denominator of Scouting worldwide, may help us to re-discover the deep educational and social value not only of the words, but of the symbols and gestures that accompany the very moment when a youngster becomes a Scout committing, on her/his honour to do her/his best toward the Spirit who guides her/his life and community and toward her/his country and the community to whom she or he belongs. To make of service to others a permanent behaviour. To have in the few points of the Scout law the ideal horizon of her/his life.

Values such as trustworthiness, loyalty, solidarity, kindness, respect for the natural environment, optimism and frugality, learned walking under the rain, with suffering feet and still singing; sharing food and shelter; playing, laughing and praying together at the campfire, or sleeping under canvas or under the stars at the end of the day; helping those in most difficult circumstances. Opening oneself to the world.

Once again in this centenary year, on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, together, when the sun rises, millions of Scouts, let's raise our right hand, the bigger and stronger helping the smaller and weaker, recalling the three points of our Promise, let's reaffirm our commitment to make of this world a place of solidarity and social justice: creating a better world.