



January 18, 2017

Dear Father:

Catholic girls have for decades been spiritually and socially fortified by participation in programs and activities run by *Girl Scouts of the United States of America* (GSUSA). The Girl Scouting movement is a federation of interdependent entities and GSUSA is the national organization that grants charters to local councils and provides national direction to the Girl Scouts movement. Every local council operates as an individual 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

In 2006, GSUSA formally began a structural reorganization as well as a significant revision of programmatic materials. Not long after these revisions were made I began receiving complaints from Catholic parents whose daughters were in Girl Scouts. After some investigation it was discovered that some of the printed and online materials promoted by GSUSA were in conflict with Catholic moral teaching and at odds with Catholic sensibilities. Additionally, GSUSA is a member organization of the *World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (WAGGGS) and WAGGGS has acknowledged that, through particular member organizations, delegates, or WAGGGS' own communications, it promotes and advocates for the education of girls and young women in the area of so-called "sexual and reproductive health/rights."

In response to these concerns, the Archdiocese began meeting with Girl Scout officials to address the parental complaints and to encourage GSUSA to revise their programmatic materials and reconsider some of the individuals that they held up as role-models to girls. Local Girl Scout leaders were encouraged to lobby GSUSA to change what was offensive to Catholic parents. Despite conversations at the local, regional and national levels, and despite some changes that have been made to the programmatic materials, concerns about the direction of GSUSA and their association with WAGGGS persist.

In recent years, the Archdiocese became aware of another Christian scouting program entitled *American Heritage Girls*. Dialogue with officials from *American Heritage Girls* have been affirming, demonstrates programming rooted in Christian values, and reveals an organizational mindset that is consistent with what Catholic parents would desire for their daughters. After discussing this issue with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council and with the support of the Archdiocesan Youth Office, I am asking parishes to make *American Heritage Girls* the preferred scouting program for Catholic girls.

I encourage pastors who have not already moved in this direction, to meet with your local Girl Scout leaders and explain our deep concerns and the decade-long process that we have gone through with GSUSA. You will find more details about the Church's concerns with GSUSA at <http://www.archkck.org/scouting-home>. Let them know that their leadership is greatly valued; the local volunteer Girl Scout leaders are most often wonderful, faith-filled and caring individuals. Invite them to remain involved in scouting

by being part of the transition to *American Heritage Girls*. There are two approaches that you might consider in making the transition:

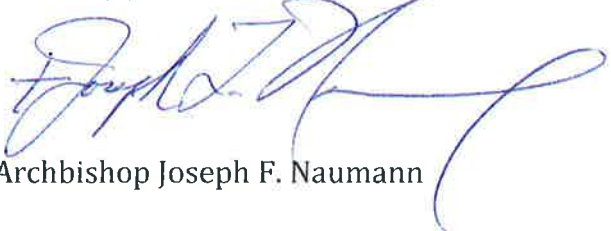
- The first is to work with parish Girl Scout leaders to make the move to *American Heritage Girls* all at once. This eliminates the challenges of having two scouting programs for girls running in the parish simultaneously. Unlike Girl Scout troops, which are not chartered by parishes, *American Heritage Girls* troops must belong to a Charter Organization (such as a parish). For more information on starting an *American Heritage Girls* troop go to <https://www.americanheritagegirls.org/get-involved/start-troop/>
- The second approach is to have the kindergarten class of 2017-2018 be the start of your *American Heritage Girls* troop, and each year move up a grade. This allows a more gradual transition.

Pastors working with their scouting leadership will need to determine the best course of action for their parish. Minimally, kindergarteners interested in scouting from the kindergarten class of the 2017-2018 school year should be directed to participate in *American Heritage Girls*. Initially, it may be necessary for parishes to partner with other parishes to get a troop started. The Archdiocesan Youth Office is available to provide assistance to parishes as needed. Parishes unable to afford the costs associated with chartering a troop should consult the Youth Office for guidance.

Lastly, GSUSA is well known for its annual sale of cookies. GSUSA states that proceeds from cookie sales remain with local councils and troops and are not shared with WAGGGS. However, since the plan is to phase out GSUSA troops meeting at parishes and to encourage Catholic girls to participate in *American Heritage Girls* parish-chartered troops, no Girls Scout cookie sales should occur in Catholic Schools or on parish property after the 2016-2017 school year.

I am saddened that the direction taken by GSUSA has necessitated the need to look for other scouting models; it ends a long tradition of cooperation that has in past decades born wonderful fruit. Yet, I am hopeful that the *American Heritage Girls* will prove to be a great opportunity for girls wishing to participate in a Christ-centered scouting program. Thank you for your leadership and for all that you do to care for the individuals and families entrusted to your pastoral care.

Sincerely yours in Jesus, the Lord of Life,



Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann