



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Message of the Holy Father to the Association of Catholic Guides and Scouts of Italy

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the Association of Catholic Guides and Scouts of Italy (*Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani*, AGESCI) on the occasion of the *National Route of Community Leaders 2024*, taking place in Verona from 22 to 25 August:

Message of the Holy Father

To the Reverend Don Andrea TURCHINI
General Assistant
of the Association of Catholic Guides and Scouts of Italy

I address a warm welcome to the participants in the *Route of Community Leaders*, urging them to draw new enthusiasm from faith in Jesus, teacher and friend, to pursue joyfully the human and spiritual path within the Church, bearing witness to the Gospel in society.

May the days of reflection foster in each one of you the awareness of how delicate your educational task is regarding children, teenagers and young people, who must be accompanied with wisdom and supported with affection. This requires a high quality of formation for those who are called to carry out this important mission: first and foremost, the willingness to listen and empathize with others, as the domain in which evangelization germinates and bears fruit.

In particular, this is a matter of developing the capacity to listen and the art of dialogue, which are naturally anchored in a life of prayer, where one enters into dialogue with the Lord, pausing in His presence to learn from Him the art of self-giving love, so that little by little, one's existence becomes in tune with the Master's heart.

The pages of the Gospel enable us to see how Jesus knew how to make Himself present or absent; He knew when to correct and when to praise, to accompany, or the occasion to send out and let the Apostles face the missionary challenge. It is in the midst of these, what we might call Christ's "formative interventions", that Peter,

Andrew, James, John and the rest of those called gradually conformed their life to that of the Lord.

It is also necessary to consider the formative impact that the life and behaviour of formators have on the Branches that make up the Association. Formators educate *in primis* by their life, rather than their words. The life of the formator, his constant human and spiritual growth as a disciple of Christ, supported by God's grace, is a fundamental factor at his disposal to confer efficiency to his service to the young generations. Indeed, his very life bears witness to what his words and gestures seek to transmit in dialogue and in formative accompaniment.

I reiterate my appreciation to your entire Association, which is an important educational reality in the Church, and I encourage you to make it increasingly a gymnasium for Christian life, an opportunity for fraternal communion, and a school for service to one's neighbour, especially those most disadvantaged and in need. Do not let yourselves be paralyzed by difficulties, but always set out in search of the plan that God has for each one of us.

With these wishes, I assure you of my prayerful remembrance and, while I entrust everyone to the protection of the Virgin Mary and Saint George, I ask you to please pray for me, and I cordially impart my Blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 1 August 2024

FRANCIS
