

Muti-Faith Service for Scouts

at Arlington National Cemetery

July 25, 2010 - Brandon Elwell

Good Morning (wait for response) –

My name is Brandon Elwell, and like many of you, I am a Scout from the Great Salt Lake Council in Utah.

SCOUTING BRINGS US HERE

We are gathered here today because of many people. These people include you, your Scoutmasters, other Scouts and Scouters that organized the 2010 National Scout Jamboree, and your parents. Let us not forget the founder of Scouting - Lord Baden Powell. He devoted his life to Scouting and helping boys grow to become good men. We thank him for that this morning.

There have been some changes in Scouting over the 100 plus years since it began, but the general idea is the same. It doesn't matter where you come from if you're a Boy Scout, because we all have at least two things in common - the Scout Oath and the Scout Laws. They have remained the same. I will comment briefly on a few of the Scout Laws and on portions of the Scout Oath as we consider why we are here today.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

But first, let us remember that we are all gathered here at Arlington National Cemetery. This is a very special place - it honors all of the soldiers that fought in every war that the United States of America has participated in. We honor them because those buried here were *brave* and *loyal* to their Country. John F. Kennedy, our Nation's 35th President who was assassinated in 1963 is also buried here. He spoke to 5,000 people in this very Amphitheater on November 11, 1961. The only other U.S. President buried at Arlington is William Howard Taft, our 27th President.

Arlington is the largest burial ground for soldiers in our Country. This cemetery includes the Tomb of the Unknowns - a place where we honor unknown soldiers that fought and died for their Country. So even if someone doesn't know who you are, you can still be a *brave* and *loyal* person, and be honored for it.

Many may not know that this cemetery was first established here during the Civil War on property of Confederate General, Robert E. Lee's wife. The US Supreme Court later returned the property to General Lee's oldest son, who then sold it to the US Government. There is a section of Arlington for soldiers of the Confederate States of America. Of course, many Union soldiers are buried here too. This is why Arlington is a place for the American people to remember and honor ALL of the *brave* - from both sides of the Civil War. This is a place where our Country

could come together after the Civil War that tore us a part. It is a place of honor, of peace, and of forgiveness. The Bible tells us that forgiveness is good. It can replace anger and hate with love.

Some day some of us may be buried here and they will be respected just like everyone else who lies here for having done their *best to do their duty to their Country* - words from the Scout Oath. This place is very sacred – it is hallowed ground. So let us all give a moment of silence in remembrance of all the *brave* who fought and died for America.

(Allow for 10-15 seconds of silence.) Thank you.

A SCOUT IS REVERENT

What does it mean to be *reverent*? We are a diverse people here in the United States. Our Troop 605 learned about diversity as we prepared for the Jamboree – we even developed a written Diversity Code to help guide us on our travels. Please allow me to share a portion of the Preamble with you –

Diversity refers to the fact that we are all different. We should not judge anyone based on whether we like them, how they look, talk, act, or based on first impressions. Differences among us are good. They can promote a wide and varied group where we can share and learn from different opinions. ... We should treat people equally, and always with courtesy, respect, kindness and as we would like to be treated ourselves.

So, back to the question, what does it mean to be *reverent*? As Scouts, we promise, “On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my Country.”

Our Troop 605 Diversity Code also includes a point on *Respect for All Religions* – it reads:

We will always respect the religious preferences of others and not do anything to make someone feel bad or defensive about their religion. This means we must respect the fact that people are reverent and may pray in different ways. We must not make jokes or comments about those differences, and always respect the prayer giver and his prayer.

Here today, we are Scouts and all honor God. We may use different names as we are reverent and pray – God, Heavenly Father, and Lord are just a few. Everyone has their own way of showing their faith. As Scouts we should be respectful of the differences. It is part of being *courteous*.

Many Scouts show reverence by praying openly, some pray quietly or in private. Some Scouts may give something up or try something new. Many Scouts show reverence by going to their Church or other place of worship. Some read and study the Bible, some the Book of Mormon, and some the Koran. These are not the only ways to show one’s faith and reverence to God, but they show us that just as we are a diverse people in the Scouts, there are many ways of being *reverent*.

Reverent is the last of the Scout Laws but of great importance. Lord Baden Powell wanted us to remember to be *reverent* at all times and wherever we go. So let us remember to be *reverent* on this wonderful day, at the Jamboree, and always.

Before we leave this very special place, I ask that we all pray together. Would you please stand for our prayer and then remain standing as my fellow Scout, Jacob DeBry plays Taps for us on his trumpet.

(Wait for the audience to stand.)

Dear God –

We all pray together this morning to thank you for letting us be here as Scouts, at Arlington National Cemetery. We thank you for our many blessings and pray that you will guide us to always do our best as Scouts and Americans. We pray for a reverent day here today and always. We pray for our soldiers resting here and for those defending our Country around the world today. We are thankful for their bravery and loyalty. We pray for your comfort to the families of our soldiers, that they may know just how much we appreciate their sacrifice and how we pray for the safe return of their loved ones. We pray for lots of fun and for safety as we begin our National Scout Jamboree tomorrow. We pray for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

(Taps is played by Cubby.)

Go in Peace my fellow Scouts and Americans.