

A PIOUS MOMENT



John Ryan



**Pray Father, that these words that follow
breath into each person who reads them the
dedication, the satisfaction, the
disappointments and the exultations of a
program meant to lift young men's hearts
closer to your understanding. This account
is dedicated to those who committed
themselves and those who will in the future.
This we pray. Amen.**

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Acknowledgement

We owe no small debt of thanks to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Photograph Collection within the Special Collections Division of the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries for their invaluable help in researching available pictures as well as granting permission for having them published in our work.

The North Texas Catholic Newspaper has the gratitude of the Catholic Committee on Scouting (CCS) for giving their permission to use all information gathered throughout our research in order to publish *A Pious Moment*. Editor Jeff Hensley and Staffers Marta Lindley and Mary Martin have been gracious and accommodating in our efforts to explore the deeds of many dedicated volunteers. From the boys who have received their religious awards to the adults who have gone before us, a sincere thanks!

Special Thanks

A very special thanks to Carl H. King Jr., Bobby and Rich Lockwood and James Sawey, as keepers of the CCS Archives, for their diligence in retaining information beginning in 1980. Individual contributors include Dr. Sid Holleman Jr., Mr. Tompkins, Bob Connelly, Nick Oechsner, Irene Herring, Ruth Rogers, Ken Majka, George Perdue, Steve Bischoff and Scott O'Neal.

Our gratitude also goes out to Judy Jensen, Estelle Metzger, Felicia Lopez, Rose Willecke, Longhorn Council Executive Terry Schwarck, Longhorn Council Executive Dan Clifton, Northwest Texas Executive Ron Boller, Comanche Trail Executive Eric Howell, Roger Schustereit, Frank Hilton Jr. and Carl H King Jr. for having provided access or assistance in many of the statistics and details.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife, Debra, and my son, Patrick, who each provided immeasurable encouragement to me during this endeavor, and to whom I will be forever indebted.

Foreword

A Pious Moment is representative of many fellow scouts' efforts recorded in our archives as well as those innumerable deeds, which are only known to those who accomplished them. This history is the first installment, meant to provide the reader with a brief measure of the length and breadth of the work of the Catholic Committee on Scouting (CCS). Although we in no way attempt to claim an authoritative account, we hope that many more scouts and scouters who contributed to the preservation and nurturing of Catholic Scouting involvement will come forward to make future histories richer with their memories.

To everyone who has been so helpful, my sincerest thanks and gratitude for all you have done to make this book a reality. As my parents and the Lord know, I am not perfect, so please do not expect perfection in this work, and please tolerate any inaccuracies, as my intentions are only honorable.

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I - A Pious Moment

The moment I had anticipated was only steps away. As I stopped and knelt, that which I had sought was pinned upon me for all to see. A moment transfixed in time which would play itself over in my mind as an achievement I had committed myself to do. The crispness of his vestments, the melodious nature of his voice, the towering figure before me with bishop's mitre upon his weathered brow. He patted the top of my head as he pinned the Ad Altare Dei Award on my uniform. A slight figure for a 12-year-old, I turned from him and my glance caught the crozier, his staff, shining in all its regal majesty, as it would remain in my mind's eye for some time. I was terrified, gratified, ecstatic, proud and a little numb as I returned from my brush with the most influential person I had encountered in my young life. The Pope was in some far-off place called Rome, Father Balthasar Szarka (Father "B") was my parish priest and friend, my father was my first hero, but Bishop John Cassata was patriarch over all I really knew. It was as if I was knighted by a King from the Middle Ages before being sent to the Crusades.

I was energized by this first significant recognition of my young life. The Ad Altare Dei Award jump-started my Scout career from a year in the doldrums of being First Class, with little direction, to finishing Eagle Scout within 2½ years, being elected Senior Patrol Leader for 1½ years and serving on CCS Retreat Staff for the 1974 and 1975 Retreats. It awakened the spirituality within me and oriented my Christianity in an age when Vatican II was also invigorating the Catholic Church. However, I would be remiss if I strayed too far from the moral of my award ceremony without inviting you to follow the footsteps of an organization formed to bring me, and many other scouts like me, to

spiritual recognition. Our journey begins with the formation of the Diocese of Dallas as the first step toward Catholic Scouting.

Formation of the Diocese

Settlers in the territory, which was to be the Diocese of Dallas, came from many directions. People came from Spanish and Indian villages, families from Arkansas / Louisiana / Tennessee came along Indian trails, others came along Kansas and Missouri cattle trails, a Confederate Catholic Chaplain ministered to families in McKinney, Czech families from Galveston rode along north/south trails to Abbot/West Ennis, farmers came from Moravia and Irishmen who laid the railroad track provided the foundation for Catholicism in North Texas. Because of the influx of Catholic families in North Texas, Bishop Gallagher of the Diocese of Galveston composed notes for the recommendation of a new Diocese in 1889. His proposal was submitted to the Bishops of the Province of New Orleans and passed onto Pope Leo XIII. And so it was on July 15th, 1890, that Pope Leo XIII created the Diocese of Dallas and named Msgr Thomas Brennan as the first Bishop.¹

¹ These were the parishes and the priests in the year Bishop Brennan was installed:

Abilene – Fr. Lehane
Clarksville – Fr. Quinon
Corsicana – Fr. Donohur
Dallas – Fr. Blum, Fr. Brickley
Denison – Fr. Crowley
Ennis attended from Corsicana
Fort Worth – Fr. Guyot
Gainesville – Fr. Coyne
Greenville attended from Wylie
Henrietta – vacant

Jefferson – Fr. J Granger
Marshall – Fr. L Granger
Paris attended from Clarksville
Sherman – Fr. Vandevivere
St. Paul – Fr. Neal
Terrell attended from Tyler
Texarkana – Fr. Barbin
Tyler – Fr. Huechmeyer
Waxahachie attended from Ennis
Weatherford – Fr. Brannan

On July 10, 1892, Bishop Brennan, attended by Archbishop Janssens of New Orleans, formally dedicated St. Patrick Church in Fort Worth before leaving to report on his work in Rome. However, Bishop Brennan resigned while visiting in Rome and was replaced by Bishop Dunne. One of his first works was to build Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dallas followed by several new parishes, Holy Trinity College, St. Paul's Hospital, and St. Joseph's High School. After Bishop Dunne suffered a heart attack, Bishop Lynch became the first American-born Bishop to ascend the Episcopal throne in the State of Texas on July 12th, 1911. The Boy Scouts of America was barely two years old when Bishop Lynch summoned the First Synod of the Diocese on September 12, 1912. Among other directives made during the synod, he announced his decision to divide the Diocese into five deaneries: East Texas, Dallas, Fort Worth, Amarillo, and El Paso. Although several of these would later become their own Diocese, it foreshadowed the development of the CCS in the Fort Worth Deanery.

The second Synod of the Diocese of Dallas was held during 1934 and instructed parents and guardians that they "are bound by a most grave obligation to provide a Catholic education for their children" in those places where there exists a Catholic school. This was another contributing factor in the accumulation of eligible boys into Catholic institutions and the establishment of scout units involving boys from Laneri High School, St. Mary's School and Our Lady of Victory High School in later years.

Although the formation of the Diocese laid the groundwork for the introduction of Scouting on a local basis, it was not until there was an organized movement on behalf of the Catholic Bishops to concentrate on one youth program that scouting sponsorship grew in the church. One defining act outside the United States was responsible for this change in attitude – War!

National Catholic Committee

The First World War signalled a distinct change in America's view of society both at home and abroad. American Catholic Bishops organized the National Catholic War Council and set about identifying opportunities to contribute to the national war effort. Scouting became a vehicle to mobilize Catholic youth in a way that would show public participation in the war effort and provide direction to boys whose families might be affected. Since the Holy See in Rome supported these efforts through its wartime correspondence, the Bishops concentrated on establishing a Scout troop in every parish.

Although the number of Catholic troops increased significantly during the war, it did not continue once the war ended. However, supporters among the clergy and the recognition by the BSA that this was an avenue in which there could be gigantic growth resulted in the creation of a committee to oversee progress. With the leadership of Bishop Kelley beginning in 1923, the National Catholic Committee assisted in increasing the number of Catholic units to 4,000. Regardless, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean War would occur before local churches would begin sponsorship in earnest. It was therefore left to another Catholic institution to be the first.