

"A SCOUT'S DUTY TO OTHERS"

National Convention,
Order of the Arrow

August 29, 1967
Lincoln, Nebraska

Delivered by Rabbi Sidney H. Brooks
Temple Israel, Omaha, Nebraska

"If I have looked at the sun when it shone,
Or the moon moving in splendor,
And my heart has been secretly enticed,

This also would be an iniquity to be punished
by judges,
For I should have been false to God above."
(Job 31:26-28)

The inspired Biblical writer, Job, who wrote those words was not insensitive to the beauty of nature. Rather it was precisely because he did thrill to the glories of the great out-of-doors and the magnificence of nature's powers that he warned us against worshipping them as ends in themselves. He was simply saying that while nature is God's handiwork given us for our physical home, our visible proof of creation and an ever-present opportunity for enjoying the beauty of our world, still the final reality and the greatest value of life is not to be found even in the most astonishing wonders of the natural world. The real values of life are spiritual. They are unseen rather than visible, timeless rather than seasonal.

From the point of view of religion, the essence of the good life is to be found not in the possession of things, nor certainly in sensual enjoyment. The essence of life is to be found in relationships, in our relation to God and to man. In fact, it is my belief, that our relationship to God depends primarily upon our relationships with our fellowmen.

You of the Order of the Arrow, whom I have the honor to address, know full well that skill in camping, in the use and appreciation of the out-of-doors, the forces and expressions of nature, are among your main concerns. Another of your goals is stated quite simply in words you well know, that "He alone

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is worthy to wear the Arrow who will continue faithfully to serve his fellowmen."

But the real test of manhood, the true measure of maturity, the ultimate judgment of one's worth as a child of God and a member of the society is the degree to which each of us understands the sequence, the order, of these purposes.

Over and again in every phase of scouting, service to fellowmen is emphasized. This is an ideal glibly stated but of enormous difficulty to attain. And never, I believe, have men dedicated to the service of others been more desperately needed.

The rule of life today in so many places would seem to be conflict, brutality, callousness to the needs of others, greed and selfishness. The individual is likely to be reduced to a number, de-personalized and, therefore, insulated and isolated from others.

The world of nature little cares. But men do. Your families do. Your co-religionists do. Your classmates, your teachers, your elders and your juniors care very much about the kind of person you are. Because your skills, your ideals, your compassion, your own unique personal qualities are needed by others. Your duty to others is so large it beggars description and can only be summed up by pointing to the preciousness of your life and your gift of it to those about you with all the goodness, cheerfulness, helpfulness and dedication of which you are capable. This is service to others. But it is also your own self-fulfillment.

I do not preach to you. I salute you. I do not need to urge you to be faithful to the ideals of your order. But I encourage you. I do not say that you and you alone hold the salvation of the world in your hands. But I think you can, in your service to others with passion and purpose, come very close to it. I do not think that the Order of the Arrow is the only organization with purpose worthy of honor. But I do pray with all my heart that more would be like you, that you will keep the faith of your Order and merit God's blessing and the gratitude and blessing of those whom you serve.

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In this age of large mass movements, impersonalization and the seeming weakness of individual effort, I would beg you, above all, never to underestimate any act of kindness, loyalty or service to others you may perform. No matter how insignificant it may seem to you, your good word and deed leads others to the same and to follow your example. The sum total of human welfare and peace will never be accounted without your contribution and your own evidence of confidence in the higher destiny and improvement of our society and our nation. Very much can result from very little done with faithfulness. "Thou canst not stir a flower," it was written, "without troubling a star."

That, young friends, is your duty of service to others. If this be your way of life, then indeed as you move through this glorious world which God has given us we can sing in adoration with the Psalmist:

"When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established, what is man that Thou thinkest of him or the son of man that Thou takest account of him. Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than angels and crowned him with glory and honor."

Rabbi Sidney H. Brooks

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