

Background on GSUSA + USCCB Conversations

What is the online resource entitled “Questions and Answers About Girl Scouts of the USA and About Catholic Scouting”?

The USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) through USCCB staff has been in dialogue with the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) over the last year. A resource produced from that conversation is online at www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/catholic-scouting-questions.cfm. It includes information for Catholic leaders and parents and was developed and reviewed with GSUSA to ensure transparency and accuracy.

What is the purpose?

The purpose of the dialogue is to provide information and further mutual understanding in order to offer guidance to bishops, leaders and parents.

What prompted this dialogue?

In recent years, key questions were raised by parents and Catholic leaders concerning GSUSA, which led to questions about Catholic participation in Girl Scouts.

What questions were raised?

The questions can be grouped around three areas: (1) GSUSA’s relationship with organizations such as Planned Parenthood and GSUSA’s relationship to its international affiliate, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS); (2) GSUSA’s policy on matters pertaining to human sexuality, contraception, and abortion; and (3) GSUSA programmatic materials and resources, and questions about inappropriate content.

How did the dialogue take place?

Under the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage Family Life and Youth, USCCB staff gathered preliminary information for discussion and then had conversations with GSUSA leadership. The exchanges were pleasant, informative and respectful. GSUSA staff was generous with their time and indicated a desire and willingness to work closely with the Church. The Committee compiled the information from the dialogue and developed the resource to guide the bishops, as well as pastors, youth leaders, and parents. GSUSA reviewed the resource.

Why has the Committee’s work taken more than two years’ time?

Information gathering marked the first phase, followed by the dialogue which was a deliberate, mutual and positive process. Time was important in order to respect the integrity of the dialogue.

Do the bishops endorse the Girl Scouts? Are the bishops supportive or unsupportive of GSUSA?

The Committee did not take up this question. It aimed to gather information for bishops and dioceses, recognizing a local bishop’s authority over Catholic scouting locally. The Committee never sought to make decisions or set out national norms but rather to share information and guidance. It also recognized the history of significant work and relationships between Girl Scouts and the Church and the service Girl Scout councils and troops have provided dioceses, parishes and local communities.

What will happen as a result of this dialogue?

Diocesan bishops may use the information as they wish. The resource offers information from the dialogue with points to consider about remaining concerns and opportunities, especially related to how dioceses can promote, foster and safeguard Catholic scouting for boys and girls. The resource does not intend to be exhaustive.

Should the Church collaborate with or host the Girl Scouts?

This question must be answered at the local level. As noted above, diocesan bishops have the final authority over what is appropriate for Catholic scouting in their dioceses.

Where do I go if I have further questions?

Media may contact media-relations@usccb.org. Others with questions can contact their local diocese.