

Come to the Altar of God

By John Ryan



During 1922, Fr Dolan created a program for Catholic Boy Scouts who were altar boys that would bring them closer to the church. He named the first Scouting Religious Award, the "Ad Altare Dei" Award or "come to the altar of god." Since then, thousands of Boy Scouts have earned their catholic scouting religious awards, have achieved a greater appreciation of their faith, and many have realized a vocation as a priest.

In the spirit of this dream begun by Fr Dolan, John Ryan, a Knight of Council 759 put together the unprecedented 2007 Ad Altare Dei Pilgrimage from July 26 to August 1st which featured 39 boys working on the Ad Altare Dei Award, Seminarian Keith Hathaway (a former scout who decided to convert to Catholicism while on a scout trip to Philmont), Fr Anh Tran (a Vietnamese priest who has served as Diocesan Scout Chaplain to the Catholic Commission on Scouting for the Diocese of Ft Worth), and 19 adults who volunteered to make it the most inspirational trip of their young lives. KC John Ryan led a number of fund raisers that resulted in \$5,000 to help sponsor over 20 scouts attending for free. KC Council 4709 hosted a Spaghetti Dinner fund raiser and sponsored an additional scout, Council 7641 and Council 2813 donated additional funds to sponsor more scouts. During 2006, John became the Diocesan Appointee under Diocese of Ft Worth Bishop Vann as overall leader of the effort.

The first stop was a visit with Diocese of Amarillo Bishop Yanta who thrilled our 12-14 year old scouts with the story of his vocation. He told the boys he was known as a "traviesa" or mischievous boy in his childhood and the one least likely to become someone so serious as a priest. However, he secretly harbored a destiny that would include being a priest and even pointed to a few unsuspecting boys and wondered if they were a "traviesa" and would become one too. Our visit culminated in his blessing and a gift of a medallion honoring St John Bosco – patron saint of boys.

