

## THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD—CAPE GIRARDEAU

Office  
of the  
Bishop

February 23, 2015

Dear Priests, Principals, and Faithful of the Diocese,

Grace and peace be with you!

For the past several years many have expressed concerns over issues and concerns surrounding Girls Scouts USA (GSUSA) and their relationship with the international umbrella organization, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been in dialogue on a national level with GSUSA. As a result of those meetings, the USCCB issued a Question and Answer statement which can be found on their website, [usccb.org](http://usccb.org). (Type "Girl Scout questions" in the search bar, then click on the second link. It is a PDF document titled "Questions and Answers About Girl Scouts of the USA (GUSA) and Catholic Scouting.")

Along with this dialogue, the Archdiocese of St. Louis has recently conducted their own dialogue with the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri to address some of these issues. Among the concerns that have surfaced are the following (this list is from the Archdiocese and is not exhaustive):

WAGGGS supports and promotes "sexual and reproductive health rights," and in many of their materials promotes artificial contraception and abortion.

GSUSA pays in excess of \$1,000,000 each year as membership dues to WAGGGS. This total is based on the total number of girls registered as members of GSUSA. The funds come from investments income. However, by having girls in our parishes as registered Girl Scouts, more money goes to WAGGGS. Many of the programs WAGGGS offers do not support Catholic teaching and tradition.

"World Thinking Day" is an optional program within Girl Scouts that has a fundraising component for WAGGGS within it.

Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem are frequently presented as role models in Girl Scout materials. They promote and teach a worldview that is contrary to a Catholic worldview.

The *Journeys* series (GSUSA's manuals) contain many other role models and organizations that promote views contrary to Church teaching as well.

The Girl Scout programs in our diocese have enjoyed a long history of cooperation with several of our Catholic parishes. I wish to again commend the service of the dedicated Girl Scout troop leaders who have volunteered their time and contributions with the very best intentions and desires to provide a program that helps our Catholic girls grow in leadership and character. Nevertheless, GSUSA is a secular organization, and does not fully promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. Such organizations are prone to shift with the prevailing culture and trends of the world, which are often at odds with our Catholic Faith. Our relationship with GSUSA will require on-going vigilance.

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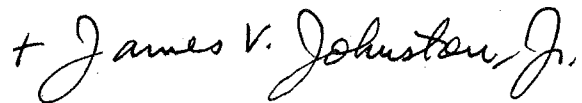
As a result, many have asked for other options; specifically programs that can help form our girls into faithful women of God, along with the various other aspects of scouting that touch on leadership, service, character, and fun.

To that end, I am recommending American Heritage Girls ([www.ahgonline.org](http://www.ahgonline.org)), a rapidly growing program that is meeting the desires of Catholic pastors and parents that seek a scouting program for girls that is in harmony with our Catholic Faith. I recently met with Julie Goodwin, the National Representative of American Heritage Girls for Catholic Relations. She provided me with materials and information which show how their program is designed to complement the objectives of our Catholic Youth Ministry through "Faith, Service, Fun."

If you wish to explore this as a possibility for the girls in your families, please contact either Troy Casteel, the Director of Family Ministries, or Julie Goodwin at [goodwinj@ahgonline.org](mailto:goodwinj@ahgonline.org).

Thank you for your engagement and support of our various youth ministry programs and retreats, including Catholic Scouting. Together, let us work to form our girls into faithful women of God.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James V. Johnston, Jr." with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr., D.D., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau