



FNE takes active role in New Evangelization in North America

NIAGARA FALLS – Since 2014, Niagara Falls has had a local unit of the Federation of North American Explorers, a Catholic outdoor adventure movement for youth that works to promote faith, develop character, and train young people in outdoor skills. The Niagara Falls group is called the Niagara River Explorers, FNE, named in honor of the landmark of its hometown, and it has a rich history that began north of the border.

As an openly Catholic youth program, the FNE claims Robert Baden-Powell, who established the Boy Scout Association in Britain, in 1908, as its founder. Along with the Venerable Father Jacques Sevin, who brought scouting to France and allied scouting with Gospel values, the FNE uses Baden-Powell's "Scouting for Boys" as its guidebook, although it would not officially be formed until decades after Baden-Powell's death.

The FNE, along with its parent movement, the Roman Catholic Federation of Scouts of Europe, had received approval from the Vatican as an International Association of the Faithful. The Vatican has recognized 122 such associations in the world today, all of which make evangelization their key mission.

Associations of the Faithful are charismatic movements responding to promptings of the Holy Spirit. According to St. John Paul II, they "continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift." He referred to them



COURTESY OF FEDERATION OF NORTH AMERICAN EXPLORERS

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as evidence of the New Evangelization, a grassroots effort by laity and religious to renew culture with the love of Christ.

A Canadian, Paul Ritchi of Toronto, started FNE in 1999 as a response to his nation's cultural need. For 15 years, he worked to develop this into a model Catholic exploring movement. During those years, he obtained his archbishop's wholehearted support and built up five units, with some 200 members in Ontario and Quebec.

From there, Ritchi's 15 years in Canada laid the groundwork for the FNE to take root rapidly in the United

States. From 2013 to 2016, 20 new FNE groups sprouted in the U.S., and units have been formed – under the close personal guidance of Ritchi – in 15 states. Thanks to Ritchi's groundwork, they had a Baden-Powell exploring program ready to go, one that was faithful to Catholic moral teachings and unabashedly Catholic.

Pierre de Rosa, group chief of the Niagara River Explorers FNE Group says of the group, We do our best to run an outdoor adventure movement where we reach boys, teach them love for the truth, and teach them how to be men of faith, men who can stand strong. Our culture will need them."