

It's that time of year again. The doorbell rings and you find yourself facing an earnest ten-year-old girl in uniform, equipped with clipboard and order forms, asking if you are willing to buy some Girl Scout cookies. Or perhaps, on entering your neighborhood grocery, you run into a pair of mothers manning a card table and shepherding their Brownie daughters who gently accost you in unison - "Would you like to buy some Girl Scout cookies?" In years gone by, helping the Girl Scouts with their annual cookie sale was nearly as axiomatic as donating to the Salvation Army at Christmas time. However, the steady and inexorable leftward tilt of the Girl Scouts in recent years has prompted many Catholics (your author included) and others to boycott this seemingly innocuous annual enterprise.

Certainly the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) can claim a long and largely honorable history dating back to 1912, just one year after the founding of the Boy Scouts. Some 59 million American women alive today have participated in the Girl Scouts over the years, including [famous alumna](#) in the worlds of politics, sports, and entertainment. According to its website, GSUSA currently [boasts](#) 1.8 million girl members and another 800,000 adults, mostly volunteers, within their organization. And, make no mistake about it, the Girl Scouts are also big business, claiming over \$92 million in [total revenue](#) for 2015.

But somewhere along the way, the Girl Scouts went adrift. So seriously adrift, in fact, that at least six websites have been established to call attention to their errors. They include [100 Questions for the Girl Scouts](#), [CookieCott](#), [MyGirlScoutCouncil.com](#), [Girl Scouts, Why Not?](#), [Speak Now: Girl Scouts](#), and (in Facebook) [Honest Girl Scouts.com](#). In addition, in 1995 a group of disaffected parents in southern Ohio pulled their daughters *en masse* out of the Girl Scouts and established an alternative, avowedly Christian organization - the [American Heritage Girls](#) - which proudly proclaims a [Statement of Faith](#). While a long way from the Girl Scouts in size, the American Heritage Girls have expanded to 43,000 girls in all 50 states over the last 23 years.

Of particular interest to Catholics, the Archdiocese of Kansas City (Kansas) [announced](#) last May that it was severing all ties with the Girl Scouts and transitioning interested girls to the American Heritage Girls. This action was taken under the leadership of the intrepid Archbishop Joseph Naumann, chosen by his brother bishops in November to be the new head of the USCCB's Pro-Life Activities Committee. In his no-nonsense announcement, Archbishop Naumann did not hesitate to criticize the Girl Scouts for their wayward trends: "To follow Jesus and his Gospel will often require us to be counter-cultural. With the promotion by Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA) of programs and materials reflective of many of the troubling trends in our secular culture, they are no longer a compatible partner in helping us form young women with the virtues and values of the Gospel."

So what has motivated all this criticism of the Girl Scouts? The answer – which should hardly surprise CFN readers – lies primarily in the realm of sexual ethics. The Girl Scouts have been promoting, whether directly or indirectly, the full range of sexual immorality and related “values” associated with radical feminism. Indeed, the evidence is so extensive that we will only offer a small sample below. Like many similar organizations, however, the Girl Scouts do not publicly trumpet their real agenda; rather, they pursue it surreptitiously or through relationships with other organizations.

In a rare public admission of its tactics, then-Girl Scout USA CEO Kathy Cloninger [stated](#) on NBC’s Today Show in 2004 that the scouts “tackle the issues of human sexuality” and “have relationships with Planned Parenthood organizations.” About this time, the Girl Scouts began to feel the pressure from Christian and pro-life groups, which included dramatic growth in the boycott of the annual cookie sale. By 2014, the new CEO, Anna Maria Chavez, felt compelled to release a [video](#) to stanch the hemorrhaging. There she stated that “we do not now, nor have we ever had a relationship with Planned Parenthood” and that “reproductive issues are deeply private matters best left to families” (both patently false claims).

Sharon Slater of Family Watch International has [described](#) her dismaying discovery about the scouts while attending a United Nations conference in 2010: “A workshop cosponsored by GSUSA for Girl Scouts from the U.S. and young girls from other nations had just concluded, and I was picking up some of the material for participants on tables at the back of the room. One was a shocking booklet titled ‘[Healthy, Happy and Hot](#),’ [published by International Planned Parenthood Federation, or IPPF] which among other things teaches girls that they have a right to engage in any type of sexual activity they desire. But perhaps most shocking was the advice in the booklet that if they happened to be HIV positive it was completely up to them to decide whether to inform any sexual partner of their condition.”

Further in her narrative, Slater states, “Most parents of current Girl Scouts have no idea what their daughters will be exposed to as they move up through the ranks in the Girl Scout program, nor are they aware of what their donations and dues paid to the Girl Scouts may be funding that may run counter to their family values...As we talked to parents and showed them some of the evidence we found during the course of our research (which was aided substantially by a team of very concerned former Girl Scouts, parents of Girl Scouts and Girl Scout leaders) it quickly became apparent that a growing number of parents disagree with many of the new elements of the Girl Scout program and the direction they are taking.”

In addition to its loose but persistent relationship with Planned Parenthood (and the IPPF), the GSUSA is a member organization of WAGGGS, or the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. WAGGGS is notoriously pro-abortion and has [advocated](#) before the United

Nations for “*sexual and reproductive health and rights*” and education on “*sexual orientation*.” Furthermore, GSUSA is a major member contributor to WAGGGS’ international agenda, donating well over one million dollars annually. Like the GSUSA’s [website](#), the WAGGGS website dissimulates about its agenda. However, a quick glance at its activities, such as [World Thinking Day](#) coming up in late February, is hardly reassuring.

Over the years, the Girl Scouts have also assembled a long [list](#) of radical feminists and abortion activists as role models for their young girls. Such figures include Hillary Clinton, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Madeleine Albright, and (recently) Wendy Davis, who conducted a high-profile campaign in opposition to a Texas bill proposing restrictions on abortion. During her 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton appeared in a [photo-op](#) with an accommodating Kentucky Girl Scout council and ostensibly made a purchase of cookies. It is not much of a stretch to conclude that, after several formative years learning about the “greatness” of such women, Girl Scout alumna have shaped their (probably life-long) social and political philosophies accordingly. For the Girl Scouts, honoring the likes of a Phyllis Schlafly, Pam Tebow, or Nikki Haley would be tantamount to heresy.

Some final thoughts. First, if the opportunity arises, make a point of refusing to buy cookies and courteously but firmly explain why. For obvious reasons, this entails discussion with a girl scout’s mother or other sponsoring adult, not the girl herself. Archbishop Naumann’s statement, cited above, provides excellent guidelines. Secondly, the Catholic bishops, normally so passive on such issues, have the chance under Naumann’s leadership (beginning in late 2018) to provide either a wake-up call or a body blow to the Girl Scouts. The fact that a majority of the bishops voted for Naumann as their next pro-life head likely indicates that there is much latent sentiment for a more assertive stance concerning sexual ethics. Finally, whether they know it or not, the Girl Scouts by pursuing their current policies are cooperating in their own demise. According to a 2017 [study](#) by the National Center for Health Statistics, the fertility rate in the U.S. continues its long-term decline and is now at a record low, even below replacement level. In short, it still may not be too late to help return the Girl Scouts to their original moral climate. Now is the time for all good men (and women) to abstain from Thin Mints.