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Good Morning!

For those of you who don't know me, I am Joleen Ricci, I've been a member of St. Paul's all my life and have been in Girl Scouts for 13 years. I joined Girl Scouts when I was 5 years old, the youngest you can start, and I just recently celebrated my 18th birthday, so scouting has been a very big part of my life to say the least.

As a Daisy, which is the youngest level of Girl Scouts, one of the first things we learn is the Girl Scout Law: I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and to respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout. As my troop has grown older we don't often talk about the Girl Scout law anymore, but I could still recite it by memory if you asked me too. These qualities that the law speaks about are not only important to being a Girl Scout but to being a good person. And I can certainly say that Girl Scouts has played a very large role in the person I am today. I'd like to spend some time going through each part of the Girl Scout Law and how it has impacted my life.

HONEST AND FAIR

There are two types of honesty I want to address here. Being honest with yourself and being an honest person. I am a firm believer that you should always be honest with yourself and with who you are, don't try to be something you aren't for other people.

And although I've struggled with that plenty, as most young people do, Girl Scouts has always given me a safe place to truly be myself, and discover who I am. No matter what, I have always felt accepted, and felt comfortable being 100% myself. Girl Scouts encourages individuality and creativity and celebrates being unique.

Being an honest person ties in with being **RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT I SAY AND DO**. Everybody makes mistakes, I think that is something that is very important to remember in life. In my opinion, owning up to your mistakes is one of the most respectable things a person can do. It shows honesty to yourself and to others. I've also learned that a lot of conflict can be avoided by being honest and upfront with people from the start.

Growing up as kids sometimes we do stupid things. We don't always think about how our actions can affect others. I can think of an example when I was 8 or 9 where a friend and I tricked a babysitter into doing some yard work so that we didn't have to do it. In the end, we realized that we had hurt someone else and needed to fix it. We talked with our parents and

the babysitter and admitted our mistakes, and most importantly we didn't try to hide from it. Even though it was awkward and uncomfortable, I knew right away that I had to come clean and take responsibility and I know that the situation was resolved faster because of it.

FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL

As I'm sure many of you know, a big part of Girl Scouts is cookie selling. Over the years I have been at many cookie booths, in many public locations, and have had to sell cookies to people I didn't know. A big part of getting sales can simply be saying "Hello" and smiling at someone as they walk past. I used to be quite nervous about booths, I was always a shy kid so talking to strangers was hard. But practice makes perfect as they say, and I eventually got much better at speaking at booths, and would even dance in cookie costumes occasionally, in order to make more sales. Our leaders would always tell us that saying "Hello" can make a big difference, something that my father has also always told me. Treating people with kindness can easily change someone's day and you might do it without even noticing.

COURAGEOUS AND STRONG

I am scared of a lot of things. Heights, the dark, public speaking, roller coasters, dead deer, you name it. And over the years, my troop has done many activities, where, and I'm sure my fellow Girl Scouts and my leaders can attest that, I was terrified. Whether it was a zipline and ropes course in New Hampshire, camping in platform tents with tons of other people around, or trying to sell cookies to strangers at the Davis MBTA Station. All of these experiences have pushed me out of my comfort zone, and most of the time I did go through with it, and I always ended up having a lot of fun. Because of these experiences I have learned to be less afraid of new situations and opportunities, and been able to "yes" more often. I mentioned that public speaking is one of my biggest fears, but because of Girl Scouts, I am able to stand here today giving this sermon.

RESPECT MYSELF AND OTHERS, AND AUTHORITY

These two were harder to come up with specific examples for because I think respecting others is a big part of all of our lives and I hope I do it every day, in all that I do. And I didn't only learn this from Girl Scouts, I learned it from my parents, from the St. Paul's community, and from all my role models growing up.

Respecting myself ties in with be honest with myself, which I talked about before, but can also mean caring for myself. In order to care for my friends and family, I also need to take care of myself. This is different for everyone. For me, sometimes when I'm doing a lot of activities and I'm busy at school and rehearsal and everything, I can get overwhelmed. I know I need to give myself some quiet time, so that I can re-center, and still be a caring friend and family member.

USE RESOURCES WISELY, AND MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

When we were very young, I want to say about second grade, we did a Journey, which is a longer term patch that Girl Scouts can earn, and it has more components and is more involved than our typical patches. This journey was all about recycling, we learned why it's important, how to recycle, and how it affects the world. And this was a really long time ago, but it taught me something important. And to this day, I am known to walk all the way from the back cafeteria at my school, to one of the art rooms down the hall in the middle of my lunch just to find a recycling bin to recycle my drink containers. And it's not something that I put any thought into on a daily basis, but because of Girl Scouts, I've learned to unconsciously take that extra step.

BE A SISTER TO EVERY GIRL SCOUT

My troop has been a bit of a revolving door of different people for 13 years. So many different girls have come in and out over the years and I've gotten a chance to spend time with all of them. Especially people who I wouldn't have necessarily been friends with or even talked to simply because we wouldn't have crossed paths at school. I've learned how to work with so many different types of people whether we are baking pies together, or paddling in a two person kayak. I've learned how to communicate with people, and overcome differences and find something in common. And no matter what happens in life we will all have the memories of the time I almost flipped the kayak, or Maddie and I walked like half a mile to the car in the freezing cold only to realize we had forgotten the keys and had to run back, and we can bond over these moments forever. Girl Scouts has given me some life-long friendships, and some unexpected friendships, and given me the chance to connect with some really cool people. I've been able to use those skills to connect with people outside of Girl Scouts as well, such as on ASP trips or when I went to Drum Major Academy this past summer, I've learned how to connect and communicate with all types of people.

While I was writing this sermon and reflecting over the last 13 years, I thought about all the people I've met, the things we've done, the memories we've made. Some of the funniest moments of my life happened at Girl Scout events, and some of the most challenging too. I realize there are friendships I've made over the years that may not have been possible had we not joined the same Girl Scout troop out of chance. I'm incredibly thankful for the opportunities that scouting has presented me with. Scouting is a wonderful thing and I strongly encourage all of you younger scouts to stick with it and to take advantage of the opportunities that it provides. Amen.