

A Scouts Own
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Prayer - Venturer.

Lord, We thank you for letting us come once again to marvel at your creations. We hope that those in the group who are new to this activity will leave with the same sense of wonder that we always feel as we step into a cave.

We treat these activities as fun, but always with a sense of wonder at the thousands of years required to create even the smallest of the features at which we look.

Help us to preserve your work, both for ourselves and for future generations of Scouts and Cavers. Amen.

Yarn - Leader.

Beneath the surface of the earth lies a strange, magnificent world darker than the darkest moonless night. No rain falls. No seasons change. No storms rage. This underground world is silent as a tomb, yet it is not without life. Birds and bats fly with sure accuracy through twisted mazes of tunnels, while ghostly, eyeless creatures scurry along the walls. The floor is sometimes the home of strange insects and micro-organisms. This is the world of the caver, as beautiful, alien and remote as the glaciers on high mountains. And just as mountaineers are tempted by summits that rise far above familiar ground, cavers are drawn into a subterranean wilderness every bit as exciting as any place warmed by the rays of the sun.

There are thousands of caves in Australia. Some are at the edge of the sea, carved by the erosion of the waves, while others are lava tubes created when the surfaces of rivers of molten rock cooled even as the lava beneath continued to flow. Most caves, however, were formed as rainwater, made slightly acidic by carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and chemicals in the soil over which it ran, seeped into fissures in soluble limestone and gradually, over thousands of years, melted out branching networks of tunnels and rooms.

Some caves are too tiny to enter, while others are many kilometres in length. Within some caves are chambers larger than the biggest sporting arenas, and shafts deeper than the tallest buildings. There are towering pillars, and expanses of colourful stone folded as if they were massive draperies. The forces that build a cave work with infinite patience. A drop of water hanging from the point of a stalactite leaves a trace of mineral residue when it falls, lengthening the stalactite ever so slightly.

Scouting works the same way. Over your years in Scouts, slowly you accumulate knowledge. Much passes you by - some stays, and becomes part of you. Every experience you have in Scouting, good or bad, leaves its mark on you. There are thousands of Scouts in Australia; some are at the edge of the sea, others are in the centre of the continent, dependent on a radio link for their Scouting. Who has the easier time of it? The city Scout, who has all the

resources of the city - but all of the dangers that city life can bring? Or the country kid - who has none of the pressures of the city - but instead an aching loneliness every time they realise that the nearest friend their own age is a day's journey away?

Make your heart big enough for all the Scouts in the world to enter - for they are all your brothers and sisters.

Prayer - Venturer 2.

If you know the Lord,
You need nobody else,
To see you through the darkest night.
You can walk alone,
You only need the Lord,
He'll keep you on the road marked right.
Take time to pray every day
And when you're heading home
He'll show you the way.
If you know the Lord,
You need nobody else to see the light,
His wonderful light.

Closing Prayer - Venturers.

(1) Into your keeping, O Lord, we commit ourselves. Help us to watch for trouble and choose the right way. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that we fall into no danger, and that all we do be pleasing in your sight.

(2) The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious to us; the Lord give us peace...

[Wait about five seconds...]

Thank you all for being part of our Scouts Own.