



**MAYOR'S PARLOUR
CITY HALL
GIBRALTAR**

19th December 2011

PRESS RELEASE

BETHLEHEM LIGHT OF PEACE

On Monday 19th December, at 10.30 am, at the City Hall, His Worship the Mayor, Julio Alcantara, will be receiving the Bethlehem Light of Peace on behalf of the people of Gibraltar. The Light will be presented by the Scouts' Association (Gibraltar Branch), as has now become traditional, following its collection, this year, from the Movimiento Scouts Catolicos in Cadiz.

Scouts and Guides then take the light on to other churches and places of public or cultural importance – indeed, to anybody that appreciates the significance of the "gift". The aim of the campaign is to include as many people as possible and to take them the light and peace message, which encourages everyone, but especially Scouts and Guides, to actively create peace in their environment by being tolerant towards people of different ethnic, cultural, political or religious groups.

Now in its 24th year, the Peace Light from Bethlehem campaign was originally organised by the Austrian Broadcasting Company - ORF (Linz) - and was part of a large charitable relief mission - Light into Darkness, for children in need in Austria and abroad. Since 1986, there has been a great deal of co-operation between Scouts and Guides in many countries which has allowed the light to travel throughout Europe, such that the light is passed on 23 European Countries and for the past few years on to North America, Mexico and Canada. Each year, a child from Upper Austria kindles a flame from the "Eternal Flame" from the Nativity Grotto in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. The light is then flown to Austria from where it is distributed at a Service of Dedication to delegations from across Europe who take it back, with a message of Peace, to their own countries for use at ecumenical services throughout the Continent.

In past years the light has been presented to Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, Mikhail Gorbashov, the former King Hussain of Jordan, EU President and other member of the European parliament in Strasbourg, the UN Troops in Kosovo and to Ground Zero, New York.

A Scout's Christmas Wish

***So may this light of peace today that has travelled many miles,
Bring joy and hope to many, and fill each face with smiles.
So may every heart and home continue through the year,
To feel the warmth and wonder of this season of good cheer.
And may it bring us closer to God and to each other,
With every stranger known as friend, whether Sister or a Brother***