

The Holy See's Address during a Panel Discussion on "Olympic Values"
At the 13th Olympic Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark
October 3, 2009

Dear Chairman and participants,

It is a honor for the Holy See to be present at this 13th Olympic Congress in the City of Copenhagen. This is a historic moment for us as it is the first time a Vatican delegation attends such an event as this. Yet, we have shared a common goal ever since Coubertin's founding of the modern Olympic movement – that of fostering unity and peace through sport.

“O Sport, you are peace!” – writes Coubertin– “Through you the young learn to respect one another, and thus, diversity of national traits becomes a source of generous and peaceful emulation.” (*Ode au Sport*, in *Olympism*, p.630)

This fundamental conviction that sport “helps to establish fraternal relations among people of all conditions, nations and races” has been expressed by Olympic presidents as well as Pontiffs, and is even written into the very documents of the Second Vatican Council (*cf.* Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 61).

Prior to the Olympics in Beijing, Pope Benedict XVI stated: “I am following with deep interest this great sports event - the most important and anticipated in the world. And I warmly hope that it will offer the international community an effective example of coexistence among people of the most different provenances, with respect for their common dignity. May sports once again be a pledge of peace among peoples...! (Benedict XVI, August 3, 2008).

Of course, we know that this capacity for peace is never automatically guaranteed and depends on the condition that the men and women who engage in sport foster its inherent positive values, without allowing it to degenerate through excessive concern for material advantages or undue subordination to partisan ideologies. (*Cf.* John Paul II, May 15, 1986).

Because of this, let me reiterate the willingness on the part of the Holy See to collaborate with the Olympic Movement in safeguarding the values of sport so that all athletic activities may be –and especially for the youth– a means to advance peace and unity throughout the world. Thank you.

+Josef Clemens

Secretary

Pontifical Council for the Laity