

Holy See's Address on the Values of Sport

"The Most Important Thing in Life Is Not the Triumph, But the Struggle"

NEW YORK, NOV. 4, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the address delivered Wednesday by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, to the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly on sport for peace and development.

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Mr President,

The role of sports within and among societies can be traced to some of the earliest civilizations. However, never before has the practice of sport become as firmly established as today. Sport has become a mass phenomenon capable of engaging huge crowds on a grand scale, breaking geographic, racial, social, economic, political and cultural barriers.

Next year, the global community will once again come together to celebrate the ancient tradition of the Olympic Games, in its twenty-ninth modern edition in Beijing. As the world prepares for such an important event, we are reminded of the role that sport can play in the life of every individual and society.

Citius, Altius, Fortius. These three Latin words, coined a century ago by Father Henri Martin Dideon to describe his students' achievements in sports, were adopted as the Olympic motto, because the aspiration to be "swifter, higher, stronger" aptly describes the goals of great athletes all over the world.

Sport practiced in a healthy and harmonious way is a means to bring together peoples of different cultures and traditions in a respectful and peaceful manner. Through greater use of sport as dialogue and encounter, the Greek tradition of Olympic Truce can give way to genuine and long-lasting peace.

In fact, dialogue and encounter through sport holds great potential in the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. While the rule of law and justice remain the foundation of durable peace, sport provides the tool for warring factions to come together for a common purpose. These moments of unity may be brief and at times fleeting, nonetheless they are an important reminder that in human experience there are many more things that bind us together than those that tear us apart. In this regard, my delegation notes with appreciation the work of the UN Office of Sport for Development and Peace in fostering this dialogue in conflict-ridden places, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. We look forward to seeing a greater consolidation of its activity.

Along with fomenting dialogue across cultures and fostering peace, sport can also serve as a means for greater personal and social development. Through sport, the person develops one's creativity and talent, overcomes personal challenges, acquires a sense of belonging and solidarity, learns discipline and a sense of sacrifice. These values redound to the benefit of the greater community and help us understand the value of the common good over personal glory. Thus, we encourage sports figures to be models for youth and to help foster the

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positive values of sports.

Today's society has seen an increasing number of cases of abuse and deviance in the practice of sport, which lead to a sports culture devoid of human values.

However, the world of sport continues to have authentic role models and generous protagonists who strive to reclaim the ideal of sport as a real school of humanity, camaraderie, solidarity and excellence. A renewed and widely shared emphasis on a human-centred approach to sport would help ensure that the important virtues learned through sports become one of the means for developing and fostering healthy and responsible human interactions.

The Holy See's Office for Church and Sports was created with this ideal of sport in mind. It works with schools, youth groups, amateur sports associations and athletic professionals in order to promote a healthy approach to sport and help young people understand the positive impact sport values can have on both the local and global community.

The Olympic Creed reminds us that the most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the struggle. May the 2008 Olympic Games contribute to the common struggle to make the world a better place for one and all, through the promotion of the inseparable and mutually re-enforcing values of peace, development and full respect for basic human rights.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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