



THE HOLY SEE
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on
Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport
Session III: Sporting Events as Confidence-Building Measures and the Role of Sport
in the Promotion of Integration and Equality
Friday, April 20, 2012

Madam Moderator!

Playing sport has become very important today, since it can encourage young people to develop important values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, sharing and solidarity. Precisely for this reason, in recent years sports has continued to grow even more as one of the characteristic phenomena of the modern era, almost a “sign of the times” capable of interpreting humanity’s new needs and new expectations. Sports have spread to every corner of the world, transcending differences between cultures and nations.

Once again, the Holy See would like to repeat that, on account of the global dimensions this activity has assumed, those involved in sports throughout the world – either as organizers or as players -- have a great responsibility. They are called to make sports an opportunity for meeting and dialogue, over and above every barrier of language, race, religion or culture. Sport, in fact, can make an effective contribution to peaceful understanding between peoples and to establishing the new civilization of love.

The educational and spiritual potential of sport must make believers and people of good will united and determined in challenging every distorted aspect that can intrude, recognizing it as a phenomenon opposed to the full development of the individual and to his or her enjoyment of life. Every care must be taken to protect the human body from any attack on its integrity, from any exploitation and from any idolatry.

Thus, it is important to identify and promote the many positive aspects of sport, but it is only right also to recognize the various transgressions to which it can succumb.

The Holy See would like to recommend that all those involved in sports - managers, technicians and athletes – strive to organize and play such activity so that sport, without losing its true nature, can answer the needs of our time: sport that protects the weak, that frees young people from the snares of apathy and indifference,

and arouses a healthy sense of competition in them; sport that is a factor of emancipation for all countries, especially the poorer ones, and helps to eradicate intolerance and build a more fraternal and united world; sport which contributes to the love of life, teaches sacrifice, respect and responsibility, leading to the full development of every human person.

In conclusion, and by way of sharing a best practice, my Delegation would like to bring to the attention of the participants in this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting that, in order to ensure that the concern of the Holy See is expressed in the important nerve point of contemporary culture called sport, the late Blessed Pope John Paul II instituted, in 2004, the “Church and Sport” Section within the Pontifical Council for the Laity, with the following aims: 1) to be a point of reference in the Church for national and international sports organisations; 2) to sensitise the local churches to the importance of the pastoral ministry of sports environments, while encouraging cooperation between Catholic sports associations; 3) to foster a sports culture, as a means of bringing about the holistic growth of the person at the service of peace and brotherhood between peoples; 4) to promote the study of specific issues relating to sport, particularly from the ethical point of view; 5) to organise and support initiatives that encourage the Christian witness by sportsmen and sportswomen. Information on initiatives and documents of the “Church and Sport” Section can be found on the Vatican website: www.vatican.va , following the link to the Roman Curia.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.