

POPE JOHN PAUL II ON SPORTS

“In fact, every sport, at both the amateur and competitive level, requires basic human qualities such as rigorous preparation, continual training, awareness of one’s personal limits, fair competition, acceptance of precise rules, respect for one’s opponent and a sense of solidarity and unselfishness. Without these qualities, sport would be reduced to mere effort and to a questionable, soulless demonstration of physical strength.

“When sports are played and understood in the right way, they are an extraordinary expression of a person’s best inner energies and of his ability to overcome difficulties, to set goals to be reached through sacrifice, generosity and determination in facing the difficulties of competition.”

Address to the Organizers and Participants in the 83rd Giro d’Italia cycle race, 12 May 2000

“The correct practice of sport must be accompanied by practicing the virtues of temperance and sacrifice; frequently it also requires a good team spirit, respectful attitudes, the appreciation of the qualities of others, honesty in the game and humility to recognize one’s own limitations. In short, sports, especially in less competitive forms, foster festive celebration and friendly coexistence. While playing sports, Christians also find help in developing the cardinal virtues – fortitude, temperance, prudence and justice.”

25th World Day of Tourism “Sports and Culture: Two Vital Forces for Mutual Understanding, Culture and Development Among Countries” 27 September 2004

In our time, organized sport sometimes seems conditioned by the logic of profit, of the spectacular, of doping, exasperated rivalry and episodes of violence. It is also your task to proclaim and to witness to the humanizing power of the Gospel with regard to the practice of sport, which if lived in accordance with the Christian outlook, becomes a “generative principle” of profound human relations and encourages the building of a more serene and supportive world.

Address to the Members of the Italian Sports Centre, 26 June 2004

“It is a fitting occasion to give thanks to God for the gift of sport, in which the human person exercises his body, intellect and will, recognizing these abilities as so many gifts of his Creator.

“Playing sports has become very important today, since it can encourage young people to develop important values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, sharing and solidarity.

“Sports, in fact, can make an effective contribution to peaceful understanding between peoples and to establishing the new civilization of love.

“Sports contribute to the love of life, teaches sacrifice, respect and responsibility, leading to the full development of every human person.

“Every Christian is called to become a strong athlete of Christ, that is, a faithful and courageous witness to his Gospel. But to succeed in this, he must persevere in prayer, be trained in virtue and follow the divine Master in everything.

“Lord Jesus Christ, help these athletes to be your friends and witnesses to your love. Help them to put the same effort into personal asceticism that they do into sports; help them to achieve a harmonious and cohesive unity of body and soul.

“May they be sound models to imitate for all who admire them. Help them always to be athletes of the spirit, to win your inestimable prize: an imperishable crown that lasts forever.”

Address to the Jubilee of Sports Celebration 29 October 2000.