



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE ITALIAN SILENT SPORTS FEDERATION

Monday 15 May 2000

1. I gladly extend a cordial welcome to all of you, hearing-impaired athletes, to those who have accompanied you, to the sign-language interpreters and to members of the Organizing Committee for the forthcoming Silent World Games, to be held here in Rome in 2001. Welcome and thank you for your kind visit. I also extend special thanks to your President, Prof. Mario Carulli, for his courteous words to me on your behalf and for describing your federation's plans.

I gladly express my appreciation of your federation's work and of your guiding ideals. They are ideals of solidarity and concern for the individual, which spur you, through sports, to support our many less fortunate brothers and sisters, in order to encourage their full integration into the various areas of social life. This is a highly significant endeavour, which I warmly encourage.

2. You have wished to give next year's important international sporting event the name "silence". Even if it certainly creates difficulties in relation to your surroundings, the "silence" which marks your lives, young hearing-impaired athletes, must not mean that anyone is cut off or isolated. On the contrary, by relying on your inner values and abilities, you put your energies to use and make a valuable contribution, one different, of course, but no less significant, to respect for every individual and to his social integration.

Your association includes hearing-impaired athletes from 80 countries on the five continents. It is undoubtedly a precious opportunity to be together, to know one another better and to give one another support. Together you can offer a witness of hope to those who share your condition. By your courageous human and athletic daring, you show that even apparently insurmountable difficulties can be overcome. How can we fail to recognize that attention given to those in conditions of lesser physical or personal efficiency actually helps society itself to build more respectful relationships among all its members?

May your work achieve the goals it has set for itself, that is, to draw greater attention to the problems of individuals who have difficulty in communication and integration in the broad sense.

This attitude leads to a style of human relationships which support mutual cooperation among different individuals and peoples. It also promotes the much desired civilization of acceptance and love, the only one that can remove every humiliating form of exclusion from human society.

3. We are observing the Jubilee Year, in which Christians feel particularly called by their faith to defend and promote respect for every person, whose face reflects the image of Christ. They understand even better that the attention shown to those with physical disabilities is inseparably linked to that witness of human salvation and redemption in which every disciple of Christ must feel involved.

Christ, who gave his life for us out of love, has offered us an example of how we should relate to our brothers and sisters. May he bless your efforts and make them bear good fruit, granting you an abundance of grace, peace and consolation.

With these sentiments, as I offer you my cordial wishes for a successful celebration of the Jubilee Year and a fruitful continuation of your valuable work, especially in view of the forthcoming Silent World Games, I again express to you my esteem and solidarity, and am pleased to impart a special Blessing to you, to your relatives and to all who contribute their skills and dedication to your federation.

© Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana