



Comité
International
Olympique

Le Président

Rencontre interreligieuse

‘Comment le sport mobilise-t-il le meilleur pour l’homme et l’humanité’

Parvis de Notre Dame de Paris, 4 août 2024

Depuis une semaine, les Jeux Olympiques Paris 2024 rassemblent le monde entier dans une compétition pacifique. Notre rencontre aujourd’hui est un reflet de ce pouvoir du sport de nous réunir tous dans un esprit d’inclusion qui fait la richesse des Jeux Olympiques. Quel meilleur moment pour aborder cette question si pertinente : “Comment le sport mobilise-t-il le meilleur pour l’homme et l’humanité”.

When Pierre de Coubertin revived the Olympic Games 130 years ago, he saw it as a way to promote greater understanding among all nations and people of the world. As an educator, Coubertin knew of the importance of faith and spirituality in bringing out the best in us humans. This is why in 1924 – when he presided over the last time the Olympic Games were held in Paris – he organised a gathering with representatives of different faiths, to give a spiritual dimension to the Olympic Games. This historical context gives our meeting today a very special meaning. Therefore, I would like to thank the organisers for accepting to bring us together, just like Coubertin did 100 years ago, to highlight that faith and sport can complement each other.

Faith and sport share many of the same values that guide us to live together in peace with our fellow human beings.

For the Olympic Movement, creating a culture of peace means: bringing people together of all backgrounds, cultures, faith, or political belief. It means bringing people together whose countries are divided by wars and conflict.

This is what we are doing at the Olympic Games. In our world torn apart by so many wars, hate and aggression, the Olympic Games are the only event that still manages to bring together the entire world in peaceful competition. This is why we are so happy that our many efforts over the last years allow us to bring together athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team in a peaceful competition at these Olympic Games Paris 2024.

Just a few days ago, we saw how much the athletes are supporting this culture of peace. During a ceremony in the Olympic Village, representatives of all these athletes made a powerful call for peace. It was very encouraging and heartening to see these athletes embracing their role as peace ambassadors. In this way, they are sending a resounding message of peace from Paris to the world.

To create this culture of peace, we need solidarity. Because there is no peace without solidarity. And solidarity is another important value we share with faith.

Our Olympic Solidarity encompasses every single one of the 206 National Olympic Committees around the globe and their athletes. At the Olympic Games everyone is equal. There is no “global south” or “global north”, there is only one global village – the Olympic Village. At the Olympic Games everyone belongs.

An emblematic symbol of this Olympic Solidarity is the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. Here in Paris, the IOC Refugee Olympic Team is participating with a record number of 37 refugee athletes, sending a message of solidarity and inclusion to the more than 120 million displaced people in the world. In the time between the Olympic Games, we are supporting refugees around the globe through our Olympic Refuge Foundation.

While faith and sport share many values, they also differ significantly. Sport is not a religion. For once, I disagree with my predecessor, Pierre de Coubertin, when he said: “The primary, fundamental characteristic of Olympism is that it is a religion.”

Yes, like faith, sport can guide us on how to lead better, more meaningful lives. Like faith, sport can bring out the best in us. Like faith, sport teaches us the importance of living in solidarity and peace with our fellow humans.

But sport cannot answer the ultimate questions on the meaning of our existence. Only faith can give answers to the really existential questions of life, death and of the divine. Only faith can guide us in our acceptance of divine transcendence.

Sport is not a religion. Our remit is the Olympic Games. Our earthly pursuit is to bring the entire world together in peaceful competition.

The Olympic Games are first and foremost about sport. But they are also about much more than sport. They are about: Togetherness. Hope. Solidarity. Peace.

In this true Olympic spirit, I call on all of you, whatever your faith, let us join the athletes in their call for peace.

Please share this call for peace with all your communities of faith. In this way, our many voices will become one. This one voice will resound with billions of faithful people and billions of sport lovers all around the globe.

Together we say: Give Peace a Chance!