

**LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN, CARDINAL SEVERINO POLETTO,
FOR THE OPENING OF THE 20th EDITION OF THE WINTER OLYMPIC
GAMES IN TURIN, ITALY**

*To My Venerable Brother
Cardinal Severino Poletto
Archbishop of Turin*

With great pastoral attention, you have asked certain priests to begin some appropriate spiritual initiatives on the occasion of the 20th edition of the Winter Olympic Games, which will be held in February 2006 in Turin and other areas of the region, involving the people of the Dioceses of Turin, Susa and Pinerolo.

Numerous athletes, sports managers and trainers as well as many journalists and broadcasters from around the world will gather for this important event.

Moreover, for the upcoming Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, you, Venerable Brother, will preside at a special Eucharistic Celebration in the Sports Palace of Turin, during which the flame will be presented that will remain alight for the entire year of 2006 in the diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation. It is for this reason that in preparation for the Olympics, the date of 8 December takes on a festive meaning, namely: "*A light for sports*".

For Christians, reference made to light points out the Incarnate Word, Light of the world that illumines man in all his dimensions, including sports. There is nothing human - except sin - that the Son of God by becoming man did not give worth to. He "worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved", as the Second Vatican Council reminded us 40 years ago in *Gaudium et Spes* (n. 22).

Among the various human activities is sport, itself awaiting to be illumined by God through Christ so that the values it expresses are purified and elevated both at the individual and collective level.

From this moment, I assure you of my prayer, so that the upcoming Olympic Games serve as an opportune occasion for believers to reflect, as the Apostle

Paul suggested to the Christians of Corinth, upon the directions that can also be applied to spiritual training that derive from sport (cf. I *Cor* 9: 24-27).

May the upcoming Olympic Games also be for everyone an eloquent sign of friendship and contribute to strengthening relations of solid understanding between peoples! How can we fail to recognize how necessary this is in our day, where humanity is marked by many tensions and is yearning to build a future of authentic peace?

I invoke the heavenly intercession of Mary Immaculate so that the light of Christ, which she perfectly reflects with her entire existence, may enlighten the souls of those who, in one way or another, will be taking part in the Olympics.

To them, as to you, venerable Brother, to Bishop Alfonso Badini Confalonieri of Susa and to Bishop Piergiorgio Debernardi of Pinerolo and to the respective diocesan Communities, I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI