
AS THE ACADIAN GAMES DRAW NEAR



In a few days the 18th Final Competitions of the Acadia Games will be held at Edmundston, and on behalf of our diocesan Church I want to extend my best wishes for peace and happiness to the young athletes, to their trainers and to the many planning committees, volunteers, supporters and visitors, and the population as a whole. May these games help us discover the profound values residing at the heart of each sport.

A BRIGHT FLAME

If before all, according to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the Olympiad ought to be a celebration of friendship, universal fellowship celebrated peaceful sports competitions, the Acadia Games can be an incentive for us to always keep in mind this ideal of true human advancement and fellowship between delegations and within each one of them. A warm climate of openness that is rich in meaning must lie at the root of this friendly festival of which the olympic flame is the symbol. The Games will unfold in the light of a flame that will burn brightly during these days. This flame will be like a source of heat, a source of enthusiasm, a flame to inspire our youth, a bright light to watch over the games, a flame of praise to boost the endurance of our athletes. Along with St. Francis of Assisi and with the torch-bearing athlete in mind, we can make ours the song of praise attributed to the great saint: « *Blessed are you, Lord, for Brother Sun who enlightens our darkness: he is beautiful and joyful, vigorous and strong.* » May flame and athletes be for us a constant call to joyful fellowship!

A DEMANDING DISCIPLINE

Like all sports activities, the Acadia Games can be an event to promote the ideal expressed in the old saying « *Mens sana in corpore sano.* » ["A sound mind in a sound body."] What a discipline! What requirements of perseverance and determination! The image of sports discipline is even used by Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: « *Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should be disqualified.* » [1 Corinthians 9:24-27] The strict obligation to prepare well and develop good competition skills involves many difficult steps, such as equality, among athletes, of chances to win, the impartial judging of contenders, a spirit of fair play among the losers, and a controlled victory of the winners, are all values we cherish. And these values contribute to the enrichment of the human person and the development of each athlete. If during this Final Competition we act in this way, there are good chances that these values will rub off on society as a whole.

AT THE HEART OF SPORTS COMPETITION

In a civilisation that knows about the risk of being undermined by violence, sports activities must always return to their ideal, which is genuine promotion of the human person. This is a commitment of the Church, to encourage all to acquire true sportsmanlike qualities: team spirit, loyalty, knowledge and self-mastery, persistent effort, a winning spirit, respect for one's opponent and, above all, friendship. These qualities, which are more important

than ever, prepare our youth to enter the adult world with the energy broad-mindedness and mutual aid. And these qualities must be all the more apparent in those who have been baptised and confirmed. Jesus, who shared our humanity will be at the 18th Acadia Games finals, too. Young athletes and organisers of these memorable games, you will be a presence of Jesus at these games.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

On Saturday, June 28, at the Forum in Edmundston I shall preside a « Celebration of Life at the Heart of the Acadia Games. » This celebration shall be telecast by Radio-Canada, on the July 6 *Le Jour du Seigneur* television programme. Be amazed at this life that courses through you and throughout our country. May this celebration be one of thanksgiving for your life and that of your families, for life that is so vibrant at the sports stadium and in your community: It is God's gift to you. Psalm 150 could inspire the spirit of our feast: « *Praise the Lord in his sanctuary;/ praise him in his mighty firmament!/ Praise him for his mighty deeds;/ praise him according to his surpassing greatness!/ Praise him with trumpet sound;/ praise him with lute and harp!/praise him with tambourine and dance;/ praise him with strings and pipe!/ Praise him with clanging cymbals;/praise him with loud clashing cymbals!/ Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!* » We shall bless the Lord with song and music, through the symbols of fire and wind, through liturgical gesture . Yes, everything that breathes blesses the Lord!

A BIG EVENT

Young people of the Chaleur region, praise the Lord for the life he has given you. Young people of the Acadian Peninsula region, bless our living God! Young people of the Southeast region, bless the risen Lord! Young people of the Restigouche, bless the God of your athletes! Young people of Prince Edward Island, bless the Spirit of the Living God! Young people of Nova Scotia, bless the Lord with your feats! Young people of the Kent County region, bless the Lord with your enthusiasm! And you, young people of Madawaska-Victoria, bless the Lord with your endurance! Young people of Edmundston, bless God our Father! We want to express the enthusiasm we have for all of life, and we pray that this celebration dedicated to the Living God be most beneficial to each of us. O Lord our God, how great is your name through all the earth!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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