



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS
IN THE EUROPEAN BLIND CHAMPIONSHIP***

*Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 14 September 1985*

*Signor Presidente del Comitato Organizzatore dei Campionati Europei per i Ciechi,
carissimi giovani atleti e sportivi,
e voi tutti accompagnatori, organizzatori e assistenti di questo raduno internazionale!*

1. Siate i benvenuti a questo incontro, che è per me motivo di gioia e insieme di commozione. Ho accolto con piacere la vostra richiesta di potermi rendere visita in occasione della vostra presenza a Roma. Noi ci fissiamo gli uni agli altri prevalentemente con gli occhi dello spirito, e ciò intensifica il significato dell'attuale udienza, aumentando, con l'emozione, il comune affetto e la spontanea amicizia.

2. Ho notato nel manifesto delle vostre gare queste parole che mi hanno profondamente colpito: "Non vedere non significa non amare; non vedere non significa chiudersi in se stessi; non vedere non significa non godere delle bellezze della vita; non vedere non significa non potere praticare lo sport".

Queste parole sono un messaggio, rivolto come un forte richiamo ricco di speranza a tutti coloro che non vedono; ma sono altresì un impegnativo monito per tutti coloro che vedono e che con voi entrano in contatto nelle molteplici circostanze della vita quotidiana.

Parole gravi, perché fanno appello a chiunque ha il dono della salute, della vista, dell'efficienza, affinché comprenda che dentro ogni uomo, portatore di qualche limitazione operativa, c'è sempre una persona umana, c'è un cuore umano con tutte le ricchezze di un'individualità che va non solo rispettata, ma aiutata a svilupparsi secondo le doti e le inclinazioni proprie, per il bene suo e per il

vantaggio dell'intera comunità.

Tali parole affermano, e giustamente, che pur non vedendo voi avete sviluppato le altre capacità sensoriali in maniera tale che, nonché precludervi ai rapporti umani, voi anzi vi aprite ad un contatto con gli altri sotto certi aspetti più profondo e intenso. La percezione più attenta in particolare, l'affinamento dell'udito, vi consentono di cogliere le più profonde sfumature di un discorso, facendovi esperti del valore dei suoni per l'orientamento e la conoscenza dell'ambiente circostante. Le gare che state compiendo sono prova di ciò e dimostrano in maniera eccellente quali mete siete in grado di raggiungere.

3. Dear young athletes and those accompanying you, I greet you today with great affection.

Although your sporting activities are very surprising to people not accustomed to attending them, they have a very deep meaning: they are a sign of your great human capabilities. You do not allow yourselves to be overcome by difficulties, but are determined to conquer them. In this you show courage and great gifts of mind and will.

Man has received from God many talents, and you show that you are aware of these talents and that you can use them with distinction and determination. The practice of sport in your own particular situation shows not just a natural need for physical activity, nor is it merely linked with the spontaneous instinct for friendly competition. It also shows your human abilities and the wealth of capacities at your command. In this way you say to the world that there are many goals that you can reach also in your social activities.

4. In the writings of the New Testament the Christian vocation is often likened to a road or journey. You know from experience what a problem exists for those who cannot actually see which way to take. But everyone knows that the road to be taken does not consist of steps but of a choice which will give meaning to the whole of life, it is a very different outlook that is needed. The power of reasoning and reflection, the proper use of judgment, the wisdom of the heart: these are the gifts which guide us along the paths of life's commitment.

With silent dignity you can offer a great lesson, a healthy sign to the people among whom you live, to the men and women of our age who are often discontent and deeply disturbed within. To them you can point out the right direction on the road of life. You can show in a convincing way that a person is not impoverished when, guided by the voice of God, he or she knows how to reach decisive goals and achievements. This calls for an attitude of faith, founded on the word of the Lord, a faith which truly knows how to listen. You are magnificent listeners, and you know that it is precisely through the word that God comes to meet us. You give to the world the precious and meaningful example of people who know how to pay attention to the suggestions of the inner voice of God.

Thus, drawing upon the great wealth of your humanity, you will be able to show to all who meet you that a greatness of spirit and an attentive capacity for listening are the correct way to discover in the depths of the soul the light which illumines every one who comes into the world (Cfr. *Io.* 1, 9).

5. Finally, a word to you who accompany and assist these young people.

You help your visually handicapped friends to discover and to achieve their potential, you encourage them to have the fortitude and confidence to apply themselves responsibly to all the activities of which they are capable. You are the ones who lead them to the full realisation of their human capacities. Your work begets a deep friendship between you, and it is accompanied by generous diligence and strong concern for one another. I thank you and I congratulate you for the successes which you obtain; I thank you especially for that great joy, comfort and security which you succeed in instilling in your blind friends.

And now as a pledge of my deep affection, I invoke upon you, my brothers and sisters, and upon your loved ones and all those who give you their loving care, the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

I would like to add a further word for the athletes taking part in the third European Marathon Cup. I thank you for your visit, and I would remind you that being young means seeking the right path for one's life, a path that makes it possible to carry out personal commitments by following truth, justice and service of the common good. Keep this thought in mind while you are running your long race, and may God bless you.

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