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MISSION MESSAGE

The Olympic Games & World Mission Sunday

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push a sinking boat to safety and save the lives of other refugees. Her journey from a life-threatening escape to the Olympic pool is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

The Olympic Games are a celebration of human diversity and unity, illustrating the power of sport to bridge divides and foster global camaraderie. Through the stories of athletes from various nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds, we see the embodiment of the Olympic motto: "Faster, Higher, Stronger — Together." When viewed through the lens of our Catholic faith, the Games remind us that, despite our differences, we are united by our shared humanity and the pursuit of excellence.

Even though the Olympics ended Aug. 11 as the world tuned back to its regularly scheduled programming, there is still a way that we Catholics can continue to foster a sense of global community among diverse nations. On Sunday, Oct. 20, we will celebrate World Mission Sunday - a day set aside for Catholics worldwide to renew their commitment to the Church's missionary work, which involves spreading the Gospel and supporting missions in places where the Church is young, poor, or in need of assistance.

Instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1926, World Mission Sunday emphasizes the responsibility of all Catholics to participate in the Church's mission of evangelization and charity. On this day, special prayers are offered, and collections are taken up in parishes to support the Pontifical Mission Societies, which fund various missionary activities, including building churches, providing religious education, and supporting the work of priests, religious sisters, and lay missionaries.

While the Olympic Games and World Mission Sunday operate in different arenas — one in the field of sports and the other in the mission of the Church — they both exemplify the power of global unity, the celebration of diversity, and the pursuit of a higher purpose. Both events remind us of our shared humanity and the importance of working together across cultural and national boundaries to achieve something greater than ourselves. Whether through the spirit of athletic competition or the mission of evangelization, these events call us to unite in solidarity, respect, and a commitment to the common good.

For the last two weeks, all eyes have been on Paris for the 2024 Summer Olympics, where more than 10,000 athletes from 206 different nations competed in 329 events. More than just a showcase of athletic prowess, the Olympics epitomize the spirit of diversity, fraternity, and camaraderie among nations and individuals of varying backgrounds.

The Olympics, with their unique ability to gather a diverse array of participants from every corner of the world, promote universal values that connect us all. From competitors who have trained with state-of-the-art facilities to those who have overcome immense obstacles in resource-scarce environments, the Olympics are a testament to the universal love of sport and the indomitable human spirit.

When viewed through the lens of Catholic social teaching, the Olympics take on an added dimension of spiritual fraternity and the universal call to human dignity and solidarity. Athletes representing many cultures, languages,

and traditions converge on a single stage. This diversity and unity reflect the Church's belief in the universal dignity of every person, created in the image of God. The camaraderie among athletes, regardless of their nationality or socioeconomic status, is a living testament to the concept of fraternity that Pope Francis frequently speaks about.

In his encyclical "Fratelli Tutti," Pope Francis calls for a renewed sense of fraternity and social friendship that transcends borders and differences. The Olympic Games, in their purest form, embody this call, demonstrating how people from various backgrounds can come together in peaceful competition and mutual respect. The games highlight our shared humanity and the possibility of achieving harmony and understanding through genuine encounters with one another.

The Olympics also provide a platform for athletes from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to shine. For many competitors from developing nations, the Games offer a rare opportunity to showcase their talents internationally. This visibility can lead to transformative changes in their lives and communities. Take, for example, the story of Tegla Loroupe from Kenya. Despite growing up in poverty, Loroupe became the first African woman to win the New York City Marathon. Her Olympic participation and subsequent successes made her a role model, illustrating how sports can provide a path to a better future. Loroupe now advocates for peace and supports refugee athletes, using her platform to bring about positive change.

In addition, the story of Yusra Mardini, a Syrian swimmer who competed in the 2016 and 2020 Olympics as part of the Refugee Olympic Team, is a testament to the power of perseverance. Fleeing war-torn Syria, Mardini and her sister swam for hours in the Aegean Sea to



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