

The Olympic Games: A Message of Welcome from Australia's Catholic Bishops

Since the announcement that Sydney was to host the XXVII Olympiad, excitement has been developing.

The Catholic Bishops of Australia wish to welcome all the athletes and visitors from overseas and acknowledge all Australians who will be involved. As Australians we have an intense pride in our country and in the host city of Sydney. Along with the majority of Australians, the Catholic Community is keenly interested in sport.

On behalf of all Catholics, we extend a warm welcome and pray that it be a time of joy and blessing for all visitors.

When the Olympic Games were held in Melbourne in 1956, Dr Mannix, the Archbishop, said: "May the smile of Christ be on the Olympic Games; may the world's athletes gathered in the bond of their common humanity find in our city the peace that lies in the shadow of God".

In this Jubilee year, the Olympic year that merges the millennia, we echo these sentiments.

Pope John Paul II, when speaking to participants in sport, during May this year, in Rome's Olympic Stadium reminded us "Sport too, a vehicle of human and moral stimuli and values, can assist towards making the world more fraternal and united in solidarity". He expressed the hope that people from different nations and cultures may come to know one another better, and grow in mutual respect and esteem.

We borrow the Pope's words as our greeting: "May solidarity and peace be above all, the winners in this heartwarming competition. From the Olympic Stadium, may your message of hope be transmitted: Sport too can contribute to building peace".

Statement issued by President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis Carroll, on behalf of the Bishops of Australia.