

The Finish Line

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

I Corinthians 9:25

Olympic fever for the Winter Games continues to grow in Turin and in the Alpine valleys involved in the games. Passing by the work sites you can see the feverish toil, done so that the city can put on its best face to the world; this work has impressed and has had a contagious effect on the citizens in recent years. It has even touched those sectors in society that might seem the most lukewarm toward an event like this. I can only imagine the anxiety of the athletes busy with their training, as they feel the day of competition not far off, just as those who will be involved in different ways during the period of the competition are anxious. All of them are active to make sure that the Olympic showcase that opens Turin to the world is shining and beautiful.

Behind every showcase event there are at times dark, hidden corners, where the dreariest, less inviting things are hidden, like the specter of doping, the nightmare of terrorism or the inevitable (unfortunately) waste that the preparation of an event like this brings. It would certainly be nice if everything unfolded like a grand party, but it is useless to deny the dark side that from time to time the news seems to report about the Winter Olympic Games. With these reports follows the cloud of controversy, a cloud that has already been heard of for some time. Above all it is an opportune time to reflect on our faith, as it is placed before an ever increasingly secular world; a world

where, to all appearances, the space for Christian testimony seems to become scarcer.

Paul indicates how we must conduct ourselves in this situation, and offers us a precise and incontrovertible indication. He asks us the only real question to which we must respond as believers in Christ: what are we running for? Which finish line do we desire to reach? So it is worthwhile to take up Paul's invitation and train ourselves as athletes, staying immersed in the reality of the contemporary world but keeping our gaze fixed on the eternal horizons that Christ has opened for us and that faith makes us perceive in the depths of our being. Train ourselves, therefore, but as athletes of life, in order to be able to bring our testimony of the hope that Christ has given to the world, so as not to leave us overwhelmed by a brilliant showcase event that quickly becomes dim and leaves a feeling of emptiness that only faith can fill. Let us immerse ourselves in the great Olympic celebration, but let us not also forget that humanity that rises above every possible hardship, helping each other in a concrete way toward a greater attention to the Paralympics, where we can see a cross-section of humanity that is truly able to hope. Let us make the only contribution that we as Christians can offer, our real wealth; that is to say, the certainty that Christ, the Word of the living God, has triumphed over death and over evil.

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