

## SPORT – MORAL, ETHICAL VALUES AND RISKS (BASED ON THE TEACHING OF JOHN PAUL II)

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### **Abstract**

*John Paul II introduced a great input into catholic vision of sport. Being a continuator of Church reform (begun by John XIII and Paul VI) he improved this trend with his own experience and thoughts, he created scientific and educational backup for sport in many areas ontological, anthropological, axiological and theoretically theologically. John Paul II understood the holiness of human body and its role in human life, he understood the need of body fitness and he encouraged physical culture with his authority. He saw in sport a chance to enrich human body in ontological and humanistic and not hedonistic dimension. To promote good sport in October 2004 John Paul II created in Vatican "Vatican Sport Department"*

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"Health is the intrinsic value, important for every human being and society. Health is not only the absence of disease, as many people think. Health – is a good physical, mental and social state - as we read in the documents of the WHO, and they are quoted by Professor Żukowska [20].

Health is a priceless value, irreplaceable and therefore you need to take care of it and seek for it all lifelong. With every wishes, Christmas, nameday, or birthday we remember to wish each other much health. These words most often are spoken unconsciously, simply out of habit. It is good that they fall from our mouth and that at the beginning of wishes we express concern about the health of the other person. None of the other recognized by human values does not have such reflection in the colloquial speech [1].

Physical activity is one of the most important components of a healthy lifestyle. Lack of it or insufficient quantity can lead to serious health disorders. This applies especially to children and young people, because lack of exercise can cause abnormalities in the development of a young body. But also for adults and entirely mature people it is never too late to activate physically and do something positive for their bodies. Today unfortunately life often goes by " in

a sitting position", in front of the computer, TV, in a car. Development of modern civilization is not conducive to physical activity. Modern inventions eliminate any unnecessary exercise, and most of the work is done in a sitting position. Life requires from us less and less physical effort and unfortunately it goes hand in hand with and less interest in sport and recreation activities in the open air.

Exercise gives us high fitness and good feeling. The lack or shortage of physical effort can cause a lot of lifestyle diseases, which include among other things overweight, weaker metabolism or cardio-vascular insufficiency.

Exercise is a natural biological need, it is the basis for the maintenance of both physical and mental health. Organisms deprived of exercise, or having its significant reduction, suffer from illnesses and unfortunately grow old faster. Moreover, exercise and the work of the muscles, are the factors necessary to maintain physical and psychophysical fitness, and an important factor in the general development. Under the influence of physical activity a great number of changes occurs in our body - in all systems. For instance endorphins are released - a group of peptide hormones evoking perfect well-being and satisfaction with oneself, they also evoke any

other euphoria states (the so-called hormones of happiness). They suppress the feeling of numbness and pain. It is supported by research and some scientists claim that participation in sports competition has here a significant impact, it is supposed, that an extended intense effort causes increased release of endorphins, as manifested by runner's euphoria [13]. First of all there is then the increase in activities of the respiratory and circulatory system, changes in tension of the nervous system and in the muscle system. Physical effort increases and also accelerates a lot of biochemical processes. The exercises also develop the intellectual agility, effectively regulating the metabolic processes, by controlling the trend to overweight – they correct nutritional mistakes.

One should remember to ingrain the physical activity in one's lifestyle, and not to treat it as something done from time to time, some kind of holiday and to make it accompany human being every day and possibly all lifelong.

Health motivation luckily becomes one of the main reasons for taking regular physical activity, sometimes after years of break. Nowadays, thanks to various pro-health media campaigns, the formation of more and more new fitness clubs, thanks to official involvement in the issues of the people of the Church, and especially Pope John Paul II, the public awareness of the health value of exercise increases. Physical activity is more and more considered to be the main means of sustaining and intensifying the quality of life, human dignity and prevention of industrial diseases.

The science of man and of human dignity is the central idea of the teaching of John Paul II. No other Bishop of Rome devoted enough attention to sports issues as he did. The Pope had a very large contribution to the development of the Catholic vision of sport. Being the successor of the line of Church renovation, which began by

his predecessors John XXIII and Paul VI – and enriching it with his own experiences and thoughts he created the educational and scientific background for sport. In various spheres: ontological, anthropological, axio-logical and ethical and theological. His catechesis delivered on theology bodies are the culmination of the efforts of raising the value of the human dignity and rehabilitating it both in cultural, and purely biological terms. The body - as an object of physical culture interest - in the teaching of John Paul II gained a new, positive dimension. Affirming the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, it was put in the realm of the highest Christian values. In the realm of the sacred. "The body reveals in all the fundamental events of human being: at the time of the incarnation, it occurs at the beginning of the historical fate of man bounding with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it is manifested in the alternative of his death and immortality. Moreover, it is the condition of the human species procreation, decides on the infinite variation of units as individuality, makes human being similar to God and participates in the act of redemption and resurrection, and above all it participates in the creative role of man against the world" [15].

John Paul II, understanding the sanctity of the human body and its role in the life of every human being, the need for the development of the human form, promoted physical training with his authority. In sport he perceived the chance to make human body feel more appreciated in the ontological and humanistic dimension, but not hedonistic. "Aware of the educational and spiritual potential of sport, believers and people of good should unite in the struggle against any deformations that may sneak into it, seeing in them an obstacle to the full development of man and for the joy of life. Human body should by all means be protected against various types of attacks on its integrity,

against all exploitation and idolatry ". The Pope realized the fact that because sport is such an important dimension of human development, integrating his spirit and body, it will be and even it is already an aim of degradation and dehumanization. "Sport is certainly one of the important phenomena, able to pass deep values with the use of the commonly understood language. It can be the carrier of lofty humanistic and spiritual ideals, if practiced in a spirit of full respect for the rules; but it may also embezzle its real objectives, if serves extraneous interests, which disregard the central role of man. Unfortunately quite countless - and perhaps more and more visible - are signs of the crisis, which sometimes threatens the fundamental ethical values of sport. Apart from sport, which dignifies the body, there is sport that humbles and betrays it; apart from sport that serves sublime ideals, there is also sport that seeks only profit; apart from sport, which unites there is also the one that divides" [9].

In order to properly promote the sport attitude, in August 2004, John Paul II created the Department of Sport in the Vatican. In this way he wanted to emphasize its importance. He expressed hope that the new Department will work to "promote the sport as part of culture and inherent element of human development in the service of peace and fraternity". Sport is significant, both on a personal level, as well as global one as we read in a statement published in the Vatican. "It is the nervous system of the modern world and a new field of action of the Church. The Church, that has always showed interest in important aspects of human coexistence, without any doubt must also turn to sport, which is a field for the new evangelization" [10].

The Church recognizes sport as a very important factor of moral and social education both on personal and national together with

international field. As a manifestation of human activity sport should become an authentic school and steady practice of loyalty, sincerity and what is called fair play; and also generosity, courage, perseverance, solidarity, selflessness and respect. So when in the sports competitions there appears irrepressible violation, injustice, deception, the desire to profit, economic and political pressure or discrimination – then sport is humiliated and becomes a tool of force and money [8].

"Fair Play Chart" – derives from the chivalry ethos. Nowadays it constitutes the essential norm of an obligation nature, determines what should be done, especially in unconventional situations not regulated by the rules of games. Fair play, is a pure, fair game conducted not so much in a manner consistent with the provisions, but also in a beautiful and noble way. The implementation of this principle constitutes the educational role of sport, the shaping of moral attitudes of competitors [20].

The ethics of sport, which specifies the general moral standards obliging in sports competitions is derived from the rules of fair play. However, it should be pointed out that the attitude of fair play may concern behavior in sport and in everyday life. The provisions defining the rules for the "pure game" include the rule of equality of external conditions of competition, the rule of conscious renunciation from the chance of unfair victory, the rules of respect towards the opponent, and the rule of voluntary submission to the provisions. The above mentioned rules concern not only the sportsmen but participants of sports events, coaches, judges, fans (the problem of pseudo-fans) and journalists. A very important role in shaping the values of fair play, taking into account the possibilities of mass media should play journalists.

What an important educational role sports events organized for children and youth have to

play. Considering the great number of threats of modern sport and at the same time great strength of its impact upon young people, fair play should be the guiding motto of all sports events.

"Introduction of the value of fair play to the education system makes it an element of educational strategy of the 21st century (Żukowska 2001, p. 218). Sport and health are the two pillars of the strategy, which the educational systems of many European countries accept and implement it within alternative education, "One of the expressions of student's responsibility for choices made is being guided by the principle of fair play while making the choices" [21].

Sport is an excellent field for promotion of these values especially among young people. We know almost everything about the principle of fair play. It is of first rank among many specific ethical standards, is the basis of education through sport. Thus John Paul II as an ethicist knew about what he had spoken to the sportsmen and to all of us in his wisdom and charisma, what he really cared about when he was a father to all of us, no matter the continent, skin color or religion. These truths are universal for everyone.

Sportsman should know the secrets of his body, its power and weaknesses, its strength and limitations. He should develop by long hours of exercise and the efforts the ability to concentrate and habits for discipline, learning how to maintain strength in reserve, to keep his energy for that important moment when victory depends on gaining high speed and the final burst of energy.

These abilities and gifts are important, not only for sports competitions, but also in other areas, because the mature person is the one who knows one's strengths and weaknesses, who by discipline and persistent effort can use gifts in service to others [8].

John Paul II in all his love for sport always warned against what is undesirable and harmful both for sport show and directly for the one interested in it.

Football competitions in every country give the opportunity for crowded gatherings, where families and young people find healthy entertainment and interest in sports values [19].

John Paul II said that from his own experience he is able to appraise the pleasure and passion for sport, he himself belonged to those people who supported and appreciated sport. He loved football, he was an avid fan of the Cracovia Club and on June 20, 1980 he appealed to the football players with these words:

"Football player in the physical sphere finds relaxation that he needs and acquires the development of abilities, dexterity and endurance and strengthens his health but also derives energy from it and reinforces the spirit of cooperation. Healthy competition develops the sense of team work."

Football, like other sports can foster human. However, nowadays there are great temptations to deprive sport of its human purposefulness, which is the optimal development of the body, and through it also of the human being in competition excluding any discrimination. In sport it can come to the disruption of the proper conduct of sport competitions or taking unfair advantages for other purposes. The danger of degeneration and collapse can be connected with it. The whole human community and especially those who really love sport should not tolerate such perversions, which represent a setback to the sports ideal and the progress of humanity. The human defense deserves vigilance and noble fight (John Paul II, 1985, pp. 790-791). The Championships should always be held in a dignified way, in the atmosphere of joy, peace and friendship. The best should always win [4].

From these statements, it clearly results what a visionary of dangerous corruption and bribery, particularly occurring in Italy, in Poland or in other European countries in recent years, was Pope John Paul II. Corruption in sport is a repulsive phenomenon, because sport has to teach to educate and lead to mutual solidarity and brotherhood of people and nations.

Unfortunately, nowadays certain phenomena in sport that arouse more and more anxiety are being revealed. The term sport is used for professional sport and not recreational. Sport is currently focused on achieving maximum efficiency. It concerns this kind of sport, which subdues the lifestyle of a sportsman to achieve the maximum of training [16].

The number of sport disciplines dangerous for life and health increases. In sport there also appears brutalization and unhealthy rivalry [16]. More and more often we can observe "the enhancement" of effort efficiency recognized as doping. It is used in modern sport in almost all disciplines. Its task is to move the boundary of human capabilities [16]. It also happens that professional sport can cause serious threats to health and in consequence to human life [18].

We can boldly say that today's professional sport is often affected by metaphysical evil. Now, in every area of life the two poles are present, the poles without which ethics would not have a rationale: good and evil. Increasingly, it is noted that evil is more visible in today's world. "Miserable statement is the fact that evil is really present everywhere: in science, politics, culture, and in sport, and what is worse, that there is no one piece of good and one piece of evil, but infinitely many variants of pieces of good and evil, each of which resembles any other, especially in this respect that becomes the basis for choices and preferences." [3]

Sometimes it happens that in sport we can meet aggressive behaviour. It does not only concern typical fighting sports, such as boxing and a case when Mike Tyson during one of the fights for professional world championship of all weights bit off his rival part of the ear. Discharge of aggression accompanies also other sportsmen, evidence of which a case of a well-known player can be during one of the matches of the 2006 World Cup Finals. French football player, European and world champion Zinedine Zidane hit his head on the chest of Marco Materazzi the Italian national team player. Of course it can be presumed that the latter offended him, but it does not justify bad and unacceptable behavior. The world of sport is constantly trying to fight against such behaviour by all sorts of penalties provided in the regulations. Zidane for example received a red card then and the ban on playing for a specified period of time.

Unfortunately, the huge problem of recent years associated with sport is also the aggression from the part of fans, and rather pseudo fans, because these are not real fans just hooligans. Their participation in sports competitions, includes offending, insulting the rival team, demolishing stadiums and after the end of the sport struggle provoking the dangerous clashes between the fans of both teams. Very disturbing is the fact that it concerns young people who often remain unpunished.

Another negative phenomenon already mentioned previously, and occurring in sports on a large scale is corruption. Buying, selling matches, bribery of judges, transfers of players. This types of phenomena do not omit the noblest sport events. Commonly known is the affair associated with granting the right to organize the summer Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996. This situation met great indignation of public opinion, when incorrectness during this procedure was revealed. It put a shadow on the International

Olympic Committee. One can doubt, if there is purity and transparency in a healthy competition of the representatives of the candidate cities and the procedures, which unfortunately are leaky and cause the abuse.

Dignity of human being demands not to treat man as a tool or a thing. The effort of all people should be focused on removal of the various forms of man's alienation and on things which spiritually and physically deteriorate him. Man is psychophysical integrity made of physical and mental element. Body and soul jointly shape and form human personality. They are organically interrelated, mutually affect each other, and are equally indispensable for the wholeness of human life. The body of man is the co-host of his personality, therefore it cannot be ignored and humiliated [14].

Health and physical fitness in a clear way determine life. Traditionally sport has always guarded these goods. In ancient Greece it was preferred to educate youth in the ideal of versatility, known as *kalokagathia* (Gr. Kalos-beautiful, agathos-good). The Greeks adored well-built sportsmen. Beauty meant physical fitness and harmony of the body construction, and in addition to this good - moral and mental characteristic.

It would be good if today, according to what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "Although morality calls for respect for physical life, it does not make it an absolute value. It opposes the neopagan concept, which tends to promote the cult of the body, to devote it everything, to the idolatrous attitude to physical fitness and sport success. Because of the selective choice, which is made between the strong and the weak, this concept can lead to warping of human relationships (KKK, 1994). These are very fragile boundaries, which should not be exceeded.

John Paul II also perceived the important role of sport of disabled people. Many of them find the mean of life on playground, many thanks to sports training started to believe in oneself. These people carrying the burden of powerlessness and shortcomings of their bodies, however, took the trouble of sports fighting to gain the power of their spirits [19].

Sport for the disabled is not a matter of economic interests. They do not take part in sports competitions only to establish records in various sports disciplines. The very participation in sport establishes a record that is much more important for various reasons such as: the record of overcoming oneself.

Interest presented to the disabled shows that the awareness of value and dignity of the human person increases more and more. We need to strive to put an end to discrimination, not only racial discrimination, but also discrimination of the strong and the healthy against the weak and the sick. The idea is that people with disabilities have a place in society in all fields and levels, if the abilities allow them (John Paul II 1989, no. 4).

It is an important issue for the existing greater awareness and sensitivity to be reflected in the relevant legislation and those who work in the fields of medicine, psychology, sociology and education wished to promote the full integration of disabled people with society. It is also important that people wished to accept the presence of handicapped in school, at work and in every action also including sport (John Paul II 1989, no. 5).

Handicapped people play a large role in the creation of the civilization of love through removal of social barriers and bringing new values of not so much force, but humanism (John Paul II 1989, no. 6). John Paul II, in his speech to the sportsmen on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1982, wished them to derive satisfaction from the games and to

conduct competitions in the "ascetic" perspective, which educating to orderliness, to correctness; to respect human being and rights develops physical prowess and elegance (John Paul II, 1983, p. 153).

"The potential hidden in sport makes it a particularly important tool for integral human development and extremely useful factor in the process of building the society more human. The sense of brotherhood, generosity, honesty and respect for the body - which are certainly necessary virtues of every good sportsman - help build a society where the antagonisms are replaced with sports rivalry, where a meeting is more appreciated than a conflict, fair competition than a fierce confrontation. Sport understood in such a way is not the goal, but the means: it may become a factor that co-creates the civilization and serves entertainment stimulating people to reveal their best side, and avoid anything that might endanger them or inflict serious damage to themselves or to other people" [9].

Man can play a creative role to the world, not only through procreation of the human species, but also through building a civilization of brotherhood, society of peace, thus through participating in the act of redemption and resurrection. Thanks to body, which is the link between that what is material and spiritual - man appears as the one endowed with the world and the world endowed with man.

By taking this intention of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI turned to all the football players, to promote football as a tool to unite peoples and cultures. Speaking to representatives of UEFA and the Italian Football Federation, who attended one of the Wednesday general audience in St. Peter's square, the Pope recalled, among other things, that "football when it is practised in accordance with the rules becomes a tool of education and universal human values and spiritual values" [2]. Benedict XVI continues the

habit of Pope John Paul II, receiving football players and other sportsmen in a great number of audiences, in this way conveying them the Christian message of sport and the importance of man and his dignity in the development of physical education. So far, since 2005 at the Flaminio Stadium in Rome the tournaments named after Karol Wojtyła have been played, they are the project of the Italian Football Federation. The purpose of these competitions is to convey messages of Pope John Paul II, who was heading to peaceful cohabitation between the followers of all religions and different cultures.

The difference between sport and life is that the pursuit to sports objective is only a greater or smaller, more or less important fragment of life. Thus, life is the superior category to sport, therefore, sport should be treated as a specific element of life, and not vice versa. The difference mostly concerns the prize. Both this one in sport, and the whole life is extremely important and desirable, but the prize for life is of superior nature.

Only solid and well organized work can bring the expected results. And therefore in sport as in life, you need a plan of action, which should be executed with great precision and never surrender to the occurring difficulties and obstacles, which never miss us. You should always and with full commitment join these initiatives, as sport itself is noble and releases more positive than negative emotions. And what most important - sport promotes values that are not transient; health, truth, good, beauty, respect, dignity and justice. I think that a lot of people is of such opinion and feels in this way. I believe that despite the fact that sometimes evil creeps in, there will be people who will not let destroy the original ideas and assumptions of sportsmanship. And recreational sport will

provide joy and let live healthy to all those who practice it.

### Resumo

Johano Paŭlo la II-a enkondukis novan katolikan penson pri sporto. Kontinuante reformigon de Eklezio (komencita de la Johano XIII kaj la Paŭlo VI) li faris tion laŭ propra sperto kaj pripenso kreante sciencan kaj edukatan bazon por multaj kampoj de sporto: ontologie, antropologie, aksiologie kaj teologie. Johano Paŭlo la II-a komprenis amplekse la homan korpon kaj ĝian rolon en homa vivo, li komprenis necesecon de korpa ekzercado kaj per sia aŭtoritato instigis korpan kulturon. Li vidis en la sporto la ŝancon por riĉigi homan korpon de ontologia kaj humanisma vidpunktoj. Por propagi bonan sporton en oktobro 2004 j. Johano Paŭlo la II-a kreis en Vatikano "Vatikanan Departamenton pri Sporto".

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