

What Do Sports and Prayer Have in Common

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Sports is for our physical life what prayer is for our spiritual life. Fresh air, sweat and sun bring us into a certain communion with creation. The body is submitted to a rhythmic discipline. Like the animals, the body confronts and overcomes cold, rain and wind, and participates in the movement of nature.

Prayer is itself a uniting with the perpetual praise, the constant homage that nature gives to God, its author and creator. The Greeks intuited this connection, and the Olympics were a sacred ceremony in honor of the gods.

Bettering Ourselves

Sports is unique in that its fundamental and almost exclusive goal is to refine the body. With endless possibilities, the benefits sport brings are manifold: resistance, will power, speed. And these benefits redound to other activities, physical activities, of course, but also intellectual. Everything is made easier when the body is prepared to respond to demands.

In the same way, prayer is an intellectual activity that is fundamentally directed to improving the “spiritual capacity” of the one who prays, that is, to increasing love. In fact, when we read great literature, hear masterful music or contemplate the beauty of fine art, the spirit is called upward and elevated...but it is “distracted” by the trappings, so to speak, the works of the artist, and not the artist himself. In prayer, on the other hand, one is turned directly

to God, the Highest and Greatest, and the effects of this communion filter down to the material world.

Basic Training

Exercise, from the Latin “exercitus”, is etymologically related to the word for soldiers and training. The Romans were encouraged to be fit, ever at the ready to lead a troop to combat. This is reflected in Cicero’s criticism of the corrupt government of Gaius Verres: that he was carried on a seat for his morning exercise, showing forth his decadent and hedonist character.

A Christian is also a soldier. A soldier who should be ever prepared to engage when a spiritual battle presents itself. He must be even more on guard than the Roman soldier, at the ready for when a conversation with friends turns to gossip, when a blasphemy is used as an insult, when a searching soul asks for an answer, and above all when doubt and temptation assault one’s own soul.

One who fails to pray is like the decadent Verres, taking for granted the riches of his Baptism, but losing them for lack of attention and care.

**LET YOUR
LIGHT
SHINE**
**SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY
SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY
YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN. MATT. 5:16**