Pope Pious XII Tells Place of Sports

Rev. John B. Kelly, for 20 years chaplain of the PGA, is one of the most vigorous proponents of sports. Father Kelly, now spiritual director of the Catholic Writers Guild of America, recently saw to it that sports writers of all faiths were informed of the substance of the address Pope Pious XII made to 5,000 Italian athletes.

Italian and German athletes had been given so much of Mussolini’s and Hitler’s emphasis on sports as training for killing, the basis of sports in Europe seemed to be lastingly warped. The Pope straightened out his hearers on that point, emphasizing sports as an important factor in living. His Holiness affirmed that sports form a part of education and are very closely linked to moral education, thus becoming a matter of concern for the Catholic church.

The Pope spoke of the many benefits derived from sports and, praising particularly the principle of “fair play,” referred to the land where this idea was born, presumably, according to the Catholic press service, meaning England.

“Sports are the school of loyalty, courage, endurance, resolution and universal brotherhood; of all the natural virtues which furnish a solid foundation for the supernatural virtues, and prepare the way for sustaining without weakness the weight of the greatest responsibilities,” the Pontiff said.

He warned against excesses in sports, explaining the danger of crass materialism and false pride resulting from a wrong theory and practice regarding athletics. He referred to the falsity of the “superman” theory as a mistake that gets into sports. Sports are a means contributing to the full moral development of man and providing recreation that enables man to carry on his work and bear his responsibilities, the Pope told the Italian athletes.

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