



Current Issues in Prayer

August 2016

Welcome! The Pope invites people of different faiths to come together and pray:

That sports may be an opportunity for friendly encounters between peoples and may contribute to peace in the world.



Getting started:

I find a quiet place and become aware of God's presence. I pray that God may take control of my thoughts during the coming moments... I imagine to be in a location where there are persons from many races, all taking part together in a variety of sports... Let me take a few moments to observe the happiness visible on their faces.



Short story:

Aya Deeb, a fifteen year old Palestinian girl lives in the village of Bait, in the area of Jerusalem. She forms part of a basketball team that belongs to *Peace Players International*. Her team is called *All Stars*. In this team there are both Palestinians and Jews. *Peace Players International* is an organization that promotes peace through sports in countries where there is conflict.



Aya (front center) with her team members.

Aya recounts how, at first, she was afraid to take part in this programme, since Jews and Palestinians have very different mentalities and languages. Toot, one of the Jewish players in the team, once invited all the team members home. Initially, Aya was reluctant to go, but once at Toot's, she found that the parents made every effort to make all the team comfortable and happy. This visit resulted in the team feeling much more united and even though at first, it took much effort from them all, by the end they all felt they had really learned something important.

Aya recounts that Jerusalem went through a very difficult time last summer, as violence and then war broke out there once again. She said: "It was a time when no one felt protected and safe and I was even afraid of taking the bus. During this time, *Peace Players* made our life easier. *Peace Players* helped us not to allow racism, discrimination and violence to impact our daily lives." Aya said that she had also learned that, even though we may have different religions and languages, we are, all of us, human. What really counts is that we respect each other and try to understand one another.



Time to reflect:

How much better the world would be and how much peace we could enjoy were nations to spend their money and energy on creating opportunities for their peoples to be together to practice sports and grow in a fraternal spirit, rather than spending on armaments and war.



Let us pray:

Lord, may many more children and youths come to value sports and may this draw people of different religions and race towards each other. May they learn how to respect each other and how to resolve conflict while at their sports events.



Inspiration:

Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair.

Nelson Mandela.



Hands on:

I encourage children and youths to take part in sports.

I encourage them to participate in sports where children of other races and religions are there with them.