

ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the idea of the Olympic Games and the objective is to demonstrate and analyze its educational, cultural and ethical dimension on the one hand, and religious, theological and moral, on the other. Fulfilling of this objective involved the search of responses to these detailed study questions: How did the idea and history of the Olympic Games develop? What were the stance of the Catholic Church and the Church Fathers, as well as what were popes' teachings towards sport in general and the Olympics in particular? How should one assess sport activity in the context of the stance of the early Christian authors? What dilemmas result from moral assessment of sportsmen's behaviors? What real meaning – in the context of sport competition – does *fair play* have? What are the moral and educational aspects of the Olympics? What dangers does the Modern Olympics face?

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first one is devoted to the origins of the idea of the Olympic Games in the ancient times. The analysis of *kalokagathia* as the ideal of comprehensive human development, presentation of Olympic disciplines, Olympic competitions in art and literature, the idea of peace and the ban on organizing the Olympic Games by Cesar confirms the vital role of the Olympic sport in those societies. It also demonstrates that the Olympic Games had a religious and moral aspect. Chapter two touches upon theological and moral aspects of the Olympics. Biblical texts referring to sport were indicated. The Bible does not literally refer to sport; however, it contains certain crucial elements demonstrating acceptance of sport as a permitted human activity. The important role of the Church teaching for the acceptance of sport in general and the Olympics in particular is visible in the teachings of popes: Pius XII, Paul VI, John XXIII, John Paul II, and pope Francis. Chapter three presents moral and educational elements found in the Olympics. Educational values of physical culture are shown first, especially in the process of educating children and teenagers through sport. Following that, elements of sport ethics are mentioned, depicting particular values

realized by the Olympic sport. Finally, the emphasis is put on the question: to what extent the fundamental rules of social life (honesty, solidarity and common wellbeing) can be treated as criteria of social evaluation of the Olympic activity. Chapter four constitutes an academic reflection on chosen ethical and social problems of the Modern Olympic Games. The following issues are analyzed: commercialization of sport and progressing bribery, politicization of sport, the problem of doping, as well as mass media context of the Olympics. Moreover, the tasks of sport environments in shaping human attitude are shown.

The analyses conducted in this thesis demonstrate that the modern idea of the Olympics, despite religious pathos previously assigned to it by the revivalist of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, is not a strictly religious idea, but a completely humanistic one. The religious dimension of the Ancient Olympic Games, as well as of its modern version, was secondarily connected with the idea of sport activity, which in itself carries plenty of positive impulses for personal development, and valuable educational, social and cultural aspects. Therefore, there is no reason to share fears and objections expressed by any early Christian authors that sport activity carries an inevitable and strong danger of idolatry. A personalistic look at human corporeality brings out the value of sport and the idea of the Olympics itself. Certainly, as all positive human ideas, sport and the Olympic Games may be distorted by a human and become a kind of ideas substitute to proper religion. It is sometimes perceivable in certain sport supporter groups for whom identification with their favorite club may take on a nature of substitute religion.