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Announcement on the Paris 2024 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony



The Holy Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain would like to express the sentiments of concern and dismay at the manner in which the Mystical Supper was seemingly parodied during the Opening Ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

The celebration of any Olympic Opening Ceremony is a remarkable achievement for humankind. It is a joyous occasion of unification and a renewal of our commitment to harmony among the diverse community of nations that comprise our world.

This year’s ceremony, however, was marred by the insensitive decision to stage a scene resembling a sacred and highly significant historical moment for Christianity. This act provoked the largest religious group in the world, and many found this parodic re-creation deeply offensive.

Orthodox Christian theology and understanding of the Incarnation of Christ place great value and offer sincere reverence to images of events in His life. For

centuries, sacred images “icons” have been understood as the “gospel in colour,” and they are to be revered and offered the same honour as that of the text of the Gospel. As a Christian community which honours and worships God through Liturgical Worship, the veneration of holy icons and sacred relics, all centred on the Holy Scriptures, we are left in great sorrow and dismay when these images are flippantly appropriated without recognition of their deep significance.

While freedom of artistic expression and creativity are essential aspects of human culture, it is equally important to exercise the responsibility and obligation to treat cherished religious symbols with the utmost respect and sensitivity. Tolerance cannot be a self-referential axiom; it functions as a virtue inasmuch as it brings people together and promotes real peace and mutual respect among all human beings.

The individuals responsible for the anachronistic element of the Opening Ceremony have stated that it was not their intent to disrespect any religious group. The global outcry and impact of their decision though, have shown that it was overwhelmingly received as a blatant and callous disregard for the spirit of solidarity that the Olympic Games are meant to foster. Many Christian athletes and spectators felt alienated by the ceremony and discriminated against as people of faith, as it violated their sense of welcome and belonging in this global event.

As an Archdiocese predominantly consisting of Christian Hellenes of diverse generations, we lament that a great feat of our genos—the original spirit of the Olympiad, which aims to transcend divisions by focusing on mutual respect, excellence, and peaceful coexistence—was subverted in a manner that threatens to extinguish the Olympic flame, which is meant to guide us toward a harmonious and peaceful existence.

We pray that our Lord may inspire humanity to greater sensitivity and more sincere respect for the dignity of every human being of faith.

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