

World Cup 2010 Homily

by
Brother Marcel Diouf
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Dear friends,

I still remember the breaking title of a news article: "*Who cares about soccer!*" We can understand such a rebellion, because we are not all soccer fans. We do not all like soccer, and we do not all vibrate when the ball crashes into the net. We are not all attuned to the rhythms of corners and penalty kicks. But it is clear that the Soccer World Cup is an event that can not be ignored, for the simple fact that anything that affects humankind cannot leave us indifferent. Therefore, while Spain and the Netherlands are preparing to play the final of the 19th Soccer World Cup, I would like, as part of our family talk, to share with you, in the light of sacred texts, a mediation seasoned by five points that have marked me during the 2010 World Cup.

First point. A friend living in Jobourg phoned me from South Africa the night of South Africa vs. Mexico to inform me of the atmosphere in the *rainbow nation*, the country of Nelson Mandela. Black and white take the same bus to go to the stadium, which was not the case before the World Cup. They follow in each others' steps and kiss each other when the Bafana-Bafana score a goal.

Dear friends, this makes me think of what St. Paul writes to the Colossians in the second reading of this morning. "Christ has reconciled all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Second point. On June 13, 2010, at the launch of the project to train educators in Knysna, near Cape Town, the French Deputy Minister of Sports, Rama Yade, said: "We are gathered here in South Africa so that the World Cup becomes an opportunity to build a bridge between our continents, a bridge between our countries, a *bridge between our peoples*." The World Cup, she says, is not an "enchanted story" which will end on Sunday, July the 11th in 2010. That is why "we do not want to just stop over in Knysna. We want to help people over the long run, and support all those who embody the hopes of exemplary African football."

Dear friends, that makes me think of what Christ tells us in the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of this morning. "A Samaritan who was travelling came near a suffering man, healed his wounds and then put him on his own donkey." The athlete, the true athlete, embodies solidarity, brotherhood and exemplary values, like the Good Samaritan.

Third point. In the course of this World Cup, many people have complained, rightly or wrongly, about the sound of the famous *vuvuzelas* — the South African trumpets that resonated in the stadiums.

For my part, I like these *vuvuzelas*. They have become a cultural issue during this first World Cup on African soil. The *vuvuzelas* bring new voices, make us hear other sounds...

Dear friends, there is something about these *vuvuzelas* that makes me think of the Lord's voice that Moses speaks about in the first reading of this morning. If *vuvuzelas* can be like the voice of God, then they should resonate louder. If *vuvuzelas*, as the voice of God, can *collapse the walls of hatred*,

suspicion and racism, then they should continue to blow. If vuvuzelas, as God's voice, can make us hear sounds other than lethal weapons, then they should continue to resound. If vuvuzelas can rid humanity of the deafening cries of violence, then they should vibrate on. Our world will be that much better off.

Fourth point. Dear friends, since the beginning of the World Cup, the earth rotates at the speed of the *soccer ball*, from Japan to Chile, from New Zealand to the United States, from Diego Maradona's Argentina to Raymond's France, from Ghana to Portugal. The *earth turns to the rhythm of the ball dancing between the feet of players* and sometimes flying over their heads.

The ball makes me think of Christ as in St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians, heard in the second reading. Everything is created by Him and for Him. As with the ball, everything revolves around Christ.

There is something in the soccer ball of the World Cup, something that makes me think of the Word of God, as Moses says in the first reading this morning, that is not above the heavens or beyond the seas. The Word of God, just as the ball of the World Cup, is very near you. It is the ball of love, with which you play the biggest game of the Gospel.

5th point. Dear friends, this World Cup has revealed the limitations of arbitration and will lead to updates. After all refereeing mistakes, some people, and even the international football federation (FIFA), call for more referees on field and even the use of the eye of the camera.

This makes me think of the eye of God's camera, the only one that is reliable, and perfect. As the psalmist of the day says, "The law of the Lord is

*perfect, the precepts of the Lord are right.” There is, I said, something that makes me think of the eye of God’s camera – this “camera” of God that sees the priest and Levite described in today’s Gospel. These two men, who walked by the suffering man, were out of play. They were on a different path, refusing to play the game of love thy neighbour, the game of fraternity, the game of **fair play**.*

*We will soon hear the final whistle of the 19th Soccer World Cup. As we do, I would want a **special prize** to be awarded to the **player who played the longest in this World Cup without receiving a yellow flag**. But how do you not receive a flag in this world? Let’s listen to Jesus saying to us, love your God! Love thy neighbour! Let’s listen to him telling us, as in the Gospel, go and do likewise, like the Good Samaritan!*

*So, dear friends, long live the World Cup of **love and joy**! It takes place every year, every week, every moment. May God give us the possibility to play and win, now and forever and ever! Amen.*

Homily presented by Father Marcel Mbaye Diouf, abbemathiou@yahoo.fr, at Notre Dame Cathedral in downtown Dakar on Sunday, July 11, 2010, the morning of the final World Cup 2010 game (and subsequently translated from French).