

Press Communiqué

22 October 2013, Vatican City

St Peter's Cricket Club

under the Patronage of the Pontifical Council for Culture

The Pontifical Council for Culture (a Dicastery of the Holy See) under the Presidency of Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi has been making all-out efforts to engage the contemporary world in dialogue through new cultural languages. In recent years, this has seen initiatives in the areas of non-belief, science, communications, youth, mysticism, music, art, and economics. The Council has also opened a Department of Sports and Culture, headed by Spaniard Msgr. Melchor Sanchez de Toca, which stepped up its activities this last Sunday with a 100 Metres Race for Faith in *via della Conciliazione* on a specially built running track and a Seminar for Sports Organisers on Monday, called *Believers in Sports*, attended by Paralympians Stefi Reid and Brent Lakatos and Olympic 4x100m Gold medalist Jason Gardener.

Today, the “St. Peter's Cricket Club” is being launched with the Patronage of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Msgr. Melchor Sanchez de Toca is the honorary President. Fr. Theodore Mascarenhas, SFX, an Indian official at the Council and off-spin bowler is the Chairman. Fr. Eamonn O'Higgins, LC, an Irish Spiritual Director at the Pontifical College *Mater Ecclesiae* is the Organizing Secretary. The Board includes Mr. John McCarthy, KSCG, Ambassador of Australia to the Holy See, Fr Anthony Currer, an English priest at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Fr Robert McCulloch, SSC, an Australian Columban priest who works in Pakistan, Mrs. Philippa Hitchen, an English lady at Vatican Radio, Bro. K.M. Joseph, SG, assistant general of the Montford Brothers of St Gabriel, who has coached some of India's crickets greatest, and Mr. Alfonso Jayarajah, the first captain of the Italian National team, originally from Sri Lanka, founder of Roma Capannelle cricket club.

Why a Cricket Club? Cricket is a widespread game that has taken a strong grip over the entire Indian sub-continent and enjoys tremendous support in Australia, Southern Africa, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, West Indies and is beginning to make strides in Ireland, Canada, Holland and even the United States. There are 105 countries currently playing cricket (including Italy in 23rd position). According to some criteria it is the world's second most popular sport and more than half the world's population follows cricket avidly. The idea for a Cricket Club came via the

Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr. John McCarthy in his first courtesy visit with Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, who suggested the dedication to St Peter. Mr. McCarthy has previously been an Australian Cricket and Sports administrator and trustee of the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust.

What are the projects? There are three levels on which the St Peter's Cricket Club is working. The first level is the organization of a Twenty20 tournament for the colleges in Rome. Trial matches between *Mater Ecclesia* and the *Collegio Urbano* have taken place. A survey carried out earlier this year found that the club will be able to count on the presence of nearly 300 players and supporters among the seminarians and priests in Rome. Further interest has been expressed by a good number of men and women, religious and lay. In a manner akin to the Clericus Cup, the different colleges, universities and communities are expected to field teams. The grounds of Roma Capannelle Cricket club (near Ciampino) an ECB approved Notts Sport Astroturf standard cricket pitch has been made available for matches and there are nets available for practice in Trastevere.

The second stage is the challenge to the Church of England to a Match, possibly at Lords, the home of cricket.

The third phase aims to play teams from Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist educational institutions to strengthen relationships and dialogue with different cultural communities through the medium of cricket.

As far as the Holy See is concerned, it is the Pontifical Council for Culture which provides patronage to the St Peter's Cricket Club, which has chosen to have Yellow and White colours and the Keys of St Peter (without tiara) as its emblem.

Sponsorship and funding is undertaken by a committee of anonymous supporters.

Attention will also be paid to the large number of migrants working in Rome who can be seen practicing the art of cricket in Rome's public parks.

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