



World Council of Churches

General Secretariat

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International Olympic Committee
President
Mr Thomas Bach

Comité National Olympique et Sportif
Français
President
Mr David LAPPARTIENT

Geneva, 29 July 2024

Dear Sir,

As you may know by now the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics has been received with mixed feelings. In particular, it has angered many Christians who are disgusted and appalled by the mockery of the Christian faith as depicted in what is considered to be a portrayal of the Lord's Last Supper.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) would like you to explain to us in detail the use of this idea and whether it was intended in any way to refer to the Christian faith. The Last Supper is essential to Christian beliefs and practice and any form of misguided message is clearly unacceptable and, worst still, any expressions of mockery on what Christians hold to be sacred and deeply theological shows the highest form of disrespect and insensitivity.

The WCC is represented by 352 member churches with over 600 million Christians in the world. As the largest ecumenical fellowship in the world, we have a responsibility to respond to the concerns of Christians raised about the perceived mockery of the Christian faith in the Last Supper scene in the ceremony, and thus request your immediate response to our request.

We are mindful that responses have been made public that the reference to that scene is to depict Jan Harmensz van Buijlt's "The Feast of the Gods" (1635) – the Olympian gods celebrating the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, with Apollo (not Jesus) crowned at the center of the table and Dionysus in the foreground. However, it is unthinkable and questionable that the organisers of the Paris Olympics did not give any consideration to the similarities to the Last Supper and the controversy it was bound to raise among Christians and other people of faith. Hence, we would like to receive your response as a matter of urgency so that we can respond to our members and others who have been deeply angered by what they have seen in the presentation at the opening ceremony.

We continue to pray for a safe, peaceful, and successful Olympics in Paris, and that sport would be used to unite rather than divide people in the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pillay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches