

## **Mr. Giovanni Gronchi, president of the Italian Republic**

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to see you all gathered here together, as we open the Games of the XVII. Olympiad of the Modern Era. Allow me to extend to you, along with my own hearty welcome, the warm greetings of the Italian people, who feel it a special honour to act as host to this joyous solemnity of youth, which is also a festival of peace and of human brotherhood.

When Rome was chosen as the site of the Olympic Games, the news was hailed with rejoicing by

the whole Nation. The authorities, aware of the responsibility entrusted to them, set to work at once. They spared no effort, no expense, in order to be sure that the facilities offered to all the City's expected guests might be the most comfortable and efficient possible, in keeping with the memorable occasion.

Today we can look about us with well-earned satisfaction at the job we have done, in the hope that the efforts we have made and the difficulties we have overcome, most of them due to the vastness and the complexity of the organization required, will meet with due appreciation from our guests.

It is with this hope that I extend a cordial welcome to each and every one of you, and heartily wish good luck to all those about to take part in these Olympics.

I mean, of course, the athletes.

Around that torch, lighted by the sacred flame of Hellas, shines the glow of heroic myth and legend; around it will gather the flower of the youth of every nation, there to strive in valiant contest. Souls and bodies tempered in Spartan training, loyal to their pledged word and to the rules of the Games, these athletes will give generously of their strength and of their wills as they meet the test to which they will be subjected. And to the best among them, even as in ancient times, the prize will be the pure joy of victory.

Throngs of eager spectators will watch, directly or on their television screens, the progress of this great procession, with all its splendour of colour; and the heavens will resound with shouts of praise and admiration at the power and the beauty of the human frame.

It is my sincere hope that these Olympics will instil new hope and faith in the higher destiny of man; may these young athletes, as they return to their homes beyond the Alps and beyond the seas, carry with them glowing memories of their stay in Rome, of those weeks when they felt, above all personal ambition, and beyond any distinction of race or tongue or philosophy, a unity that bound them together into a band of brothers; may they be the evangelists of the necessity and the possibility of a peaceful concert of peoples, in the sacred names of life, of liberty, and of civilization.

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