



AMERICA/CUBA - Cardinal Ortega publicly blesses athletes and baseball fans

Havana (Agenzia Fides) - "I hope that my blessing is able to cross the walls of the stadium and reach all the fans who are there, and all the players playing today". With these words, in an event that is unprecedented, the Archbishop of Havana, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, during the procession of the image of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, in the parking bay outside the main stadium of baseball in Cuba, in the Latin American Park, sent a blessing to players who were about to start a national championship match and extended to all baseball players of the island and the Cuban athletes in general.

The ceremony took place on Saturday, December 3 in the afternoon, when the Marian procession led by the Cardinal, in the context of national pilgrimage for the 400 years of devotion to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, stopped in the park in front of the stadium. The Pilgrimage is organized by the Episcopal Conference of Cuba and will cover all the dioceses of the island, its stage in the capital will end on December 30 with a large Eucharist.

Thanks to the information sent to Fides we learn that the Cardinal, surrounded by hundreds of faithful, took the microphone a few feet from the stadium and said: "I hope (my blessings) it reaches inside, even to players who are already starting the match ("Industriales", the capital's team versus the "Artemisa", a team of the province). Our prayer to the Virgin of Charity is for the local team, so it arrives in the final," said the Cardinal. "But we also pray for the team of Artemisa, so that it may have a good season, as it is a new team and from a new province," he said afterwards. "Charity (alluding to the Virgen de la Caridad), means love, which must exist between all Cubans, to be born at home, in the family, that must reconcile those who are far away. Love must also exist in work centers, in all activities, not only in sports but in all human activities, we must always sow reconciliation, love, peace", concluded the Cardinal.

Popular devotion to the Cubans Charity towards Our Lady of Charity of Cobre ("Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre") is big and extends throughout the national territory. 2012 marks the fourth centenary of the discovery of the image of the Virgin, and the Cubans are preparing for this important anniversary with a three-year period (see Fides 09/03/2010). (CE) (Agenzia Fides 05/12/2011)