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26/9/1960

POPE BLESSES 350 INTERNATIONAL WHEEL-CHAIRED ATHLETES

Pope John XXIII granted yesterday morning a general audience at Vatican's Damascus Yard to 350 paraplegic people from 22 nations, who had been participating to the Paralympic Games, last week.

The crippled men and women were accompanied by the officials of the international committee for the Stoke Mandeville Games in Rome.

The Pontiff showed himself at the balcony of the first Loggia of the Vatican Palace and delivered a brief speech in French language, emphasizing the strength displayed by the athletes in taking part to the Paralympic Games, despite their disability.

Then the officials of the international committee - including the Irish priest Leo Close, also himself a paraplegic one - called at the first floor of the Apostolic Palace, to offer the Pope an homage: two cups and an artistic ostensory.

Lately, John XXIII - acclaimed by the 350 paraplegic athletes - showed in again at the balcony, and addressed them some greeting words and his blessing.

Pope John's morning concluded with another blessing from his private studio's window to 15.000 Italian and foreign faithful tourists assembled in St. Peter's square.

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