

The Olympics should cultivate interdependence, not nationalistic pride

Mary Ann McGivern | Feb. 19, 2014 NCR Today

I'm glad Russia won the Olympic team figure skating gold medal. Sure, I thought Gracie Gold's and Jason Brown's scores were a little low, and perhaps the Russians' a little high. I want to win. That's in me, too, like everybody. But we can't win 'em all. The Olympics always make me acutely aware of how intensely the U.S. wants to win. I hate that "U-S-A" chant.

As I write, the U.S. and Russia medal counts are even. We've been neck and neck the past week. I suppose this is far better than keeping the count of ballistic missiles even, better than trading jailed spies, better than using that red telephone on the presidents' desks. But using our athletes as soldiers in yet another proxy war is not ideal.

If we haven't poisoned the well of the international Olympic spirit, we've made it taste bad. Instead of marveling at the skill and dedication of these young men and women, we watch the winners gazing at their country's flag and imagine their hearts swelling in nationalistic pride. The silver medalist stands alongside, swallowing bile.

What would Jesus do? Share his Chobani yogurt, offer healing-touch foot rubs, tell parables about winning and losing. Well, I can't really imagine Jesus at the Olympics, however entertaining the path might be. But I am pretty sure we've gone down a wrong path again, wasting a perfectly good opportunity to build a culture of interdependence. Instead, we've taught everyone to run a victory lap cloaked in their own flag and proclaim their gratitude at being allowed to represent their nation.

In my mind, Coke, an international corporation devoted to profit, is coming off well with [its Super Bowl rendition of "America the Beautiful" in many languages](#) [1], many voices. I, too, would like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony.

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[1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=443Vy3I0gJs>