

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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The 2008 Olympics: let the games begin! For sixteen days, from August 8 – 24, the excitement and spirit of the games of the XXIX Olympiad will break upon the world. Beijing, from the People’s Republic of China, will host the games, boasting the Olympic logo, *Dancing Beijing*.

From 192 countries and thirteen territories athletes will come, an estimated 10,500 in all, participating in 302 events in twenty-eight sports. Wow! It’s exhausting just to think of the enormity of the planning and logistical challenge.

An anticipated three millions visitors, domestic and foreign, will be attending—cheering on their compatriots and celebrating in the wonder and the joy of medal competitions and athletic achievements.

Since Athens in 2004, there’s been a buzz across China as the *games* approach. In many ways, the *games* highlight the emergence of China on the world stage. As with any Olympic Games host nation, China wants to look good. And why not?

With that in mind and recognizing the need to reduce air pollution, in the month leading up to the *games*, more than half the automobiles in Beijing have been ordered off the roadways. Moreover, the subway system has already undergone a massive expansion, more than doubling its capacity to carry Olympic fans from venue to venue.

Clearly, this is China’s moment to shine. She wants to invite the world in—beyond her ancient walls and traditions to the fertile developments of modern China. With the world looking on, she can’t wait to tell her story in new and fresh ways.

A glimpse of possibility. Straight away, the *Olympic Games* are the best thing we do on planet earth. Although always vulnerable to political protest and unrest, nonetheless, the games give us the best glimpse we have of *possibility* across the globe. Through it all and rising above it all, the Olympic slogan endures: ***One world, one dream.***

May it be so!

Always, the opening ceremonies set the tone. Celebrated performers Celine Dion and Taiwan’s Jay Chou will headline the festivities, along with thousands more in the total cast of participants.

But the sacred moment of the games is the athletes entering the Olympic stadium—from every nation of the earth—and then the lighting of the Olympic torch. The symbolism overflows with feelings and meanings caught up in the high hopes we hold for ***One world, one dream.***

As the torch is lit, *goose bumps* of excitement abound. Excitement for the games and the competitions, to be sure; but excitement, too, for a wider unity and peace among the participating nations of the earth.

What's beautiful about the Olympic Games is that every athlete embodies something of the best in the human spirit. The games are athletic from the get go; but they're also social and spiritual. And along the way, we all learn more about who we are and how we fit in to the global village.

One world, one dream. Just as the competition in sport draws the best out of us—often times to record heights we could not have imagined—in the same way, the Olympic spirit taps the best in the human spirit. It reminds us, again, of our common humanity; that—always—there is more that unites us than divides us; more that draws us in than leaves us out.

In the Olympics, as athletes aim for the gold, everybody wins; there are no losers. It's all about the possibilities that rise up in the human spirit—the heights to which they take us in the competition and the depths to which they move us as human beings.

So let the games begin and let the *full flight* of the human spirit be released—in the ecstasy of victory and the agony of defeat; in a glorious *Olympiad* where, as the torch is put out, everyone is a winner—having given us, once again, a *glimpse of possibility*.