

## The InterVIEW

## Sportsmanship means more than winning

*The Interview, a regular feature of The New World, is an in-depth conversation with a person whose words, actions or ideas affect today's Catholic. It may be affirming of faith or confrontational. But it will always be stimulating.*

*This week, New World staff member Bill Britt talks with Juan Hinojosa, director of the Center for Development in Ministry's Hillenbrand Institute, on the role of laity in the Catholic Church.*

Juan Hinojosa wants Catholics to see one thing when they look in the mirror: the church. As director of the Center for Development in Ministry's Hillenbrand Institute, he has the task of challenging a passive laity into becoming an active, animated and revitalized church. Through a variety of programs and conferences that examine spirituality in sports, in education and in professional careers, Hinojosa's quest is to make visible the promises of the Second Vatican Council: that the faithful are the church.

**The New World:** Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand, former rector of the seminary, had a vision for the laity. Could you describe it?  
**Juan Hinojosa:** In terms of the social vision and mission of the church, he saw it very much in the hands of the laity.

**TNW:** Do you believe the laity view themselves that way?

**JH:** Following the Second Vatican Council, many of the laity became involved in the inner life of the church: lecturing, evangelizing, catechetical work and so on. But this sense of the laity having the primary role of being church in the world tended to get eclipsed or lost.

**TNW:** Why?

**JH:** I don't know, but it is one of the things our "Salt and Light of the World" conference will explore in April. It's going to try to understand what happened to our understanding of church, world and reign of God that led us away from seeing the laity as central to what the church has to be about. It's about fulfilling the Vatican Council

document, "The Church in the Modern World."

**TNW:** Are there examples of the laity accepting this role?

**JH:** There are a number of things that do fulfill that role, but the laity has yet to feel itself called, gifted and sent in the ordinary circumstances of life, such as in their parenting, in their lawyering, etc. There are 50-some million Catholics out there. The question is what would happen if 50-some million Catholics experienced themselves as called by Christ to be church in the world?

**TNW:** This sounds like the same message as that of the National Center for the Laity [NCL]. Is there a difference between the mission of the NCL and the Hillenbrand Institute?

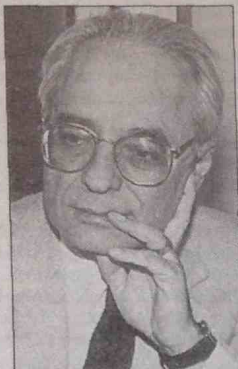
**JH:** Yes and no. The NCL is an independent organization. The Hillenbrand Institute is the institutional commitment of the church to this mission. Several of our programs draw a national audience. But our message is meant to energize and excite laity about their Catholic faith here in the archdiocese.

**TNW:** What can you tell me about the Hillenbrand Institute's "Sports, Spirituality and Character Formation" conference?

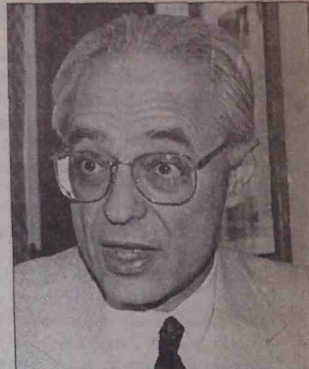
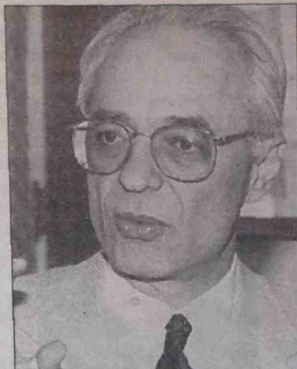
**JH:** We're in our third year. This year our theme is coaching and Gospel values. We'll be looking at some of the systemic issues around sports in terms of justice.

**TNW:** Can you describe the concept of "we teams"?

**JH:** It is a theory that basically calls each kid to surrender his or her individuality for the sake of the whole. We see this as a Gospel message. There are several successful coaches who guide their teams with this message. Even those who don't win a



Juan Hinojosa: "It's very easy to lose one's way."



New World photos by Sandy Bertog

championship have created a strong bond among the players.

**TNW:** What are some examples?

**JH:** The Archdiocese of Philadelphia used the concept of coaching as calling to develop their one-day coaches' in-service. And they were very successful. What we are trying to do is to recover a moral language for sports.

Also there is an inescapable moral dimension to sports and there is an inescapable spiritual dimension to sports that we need to attend to. So sports isn't just sports.

**TNW:** Do you believe that the moral dimension of sports is suffering in the current cultural atmosphere?

**JH:** Yes. There is no question. There's hardly anybody I speak to in sports or outside of sports who doesn't recognize there is something of a moral crisis going on in the sports world.

**TNW:** How did the concept of this conference develop?

**JH:** When you look at our society you can see sports has financial and cultural dominance in it. From the people who attend games, to those who play, to the owners, to the guy who buys the jersey or baseball hat.

It's big, very, very big. And seeing the effect it had on my children's lives gave me a moment for spiritual reflection. I felt that the church needed to offer moral leadership.

**TNW:** Where does competition fall in your philosophy?

**JH:** There is good competition and bad competition. Good competition is essential to athletics, because good competition creates the excellence that brings the fulfillment that athletics aim at. But when winning becomes everything, fundamental Christian values have become perverted, such as the dignity of the individual. Competition can become some kind of an idol. It can be worshiped. And it can become an end rather than a means.

There was a study that asked participants if they could use a drug that would ultimately be fatal, but would guarantee them to win in Olympic competition, would they take it. Overwhelmingly people answered yes.

**TNW:** What can be done about that?

**JH:** We can look to the Gospel. The Gospel puts things in the right order for us, so that we don't mistake something like competition for God. So we don't mistake winning for God. So we don't mistake someone giving us honor and recognition for God. It's very easy to lose one's way.