

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATHLETIC MEETING “WE RUN TOGETHER – SIMUL CURREBANT”

May 20, 2020

This morning, following the General Audience, the Holy Father privately received a small number of athletes, in his library, who were to participate in an international event called “We Run Together – Simul Currebant” organized by Vatican Athletics in collaboration with the athletic group *Fiamme Gialle* of the Finance Police, “Courtyard of the Gentiles” and the Italian Federation of Light Athletics of Lazio (FIDAL). The event was scheduled for May 21, 2020, but canceled due to the global health crisis.

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, presented the event to Pope Francis, who, after thanking the Cardinal, had a brief conversation with a child athlete.

The Pope then addressed those present with words and then read them a message addressed to all athletes on this occasion.

We publish the texts below:

The Holy Father’s Words

I thank all of you for the work you do: each one does something for the community, for others. And this is joy, no? It is the joy of doing something for others. And then, consequently, one receives from others. However, what the Cardinal mentioned, the joy of giving, of offering, of offering the beauty of sport, within each one’s possibility: to offer something that I have for the joy and happiness of others. And this is great, it is a human attitude; it is creative. And people even offer their life for others: mothers for their children, fathers for their children, and many others . . . to give something of mine for others. And you give beauty to others — the beauty of sport. This is something important: to understand how to give beauty. This helps, because what you are doing isn’t an exercise, let’s say of practice of speed or of games, no. This is true, but there is more. It is to give to others. It is that motto of the Association that is so important: you are not detached from others, “You run together,” together.

There is always an attitude that we find in that passage of the Gospel, of the two disciples that ran to Jesus’ sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection (Cf. *John* 20:3-6). The

youngest [John] arrives first, and then the older one [Peter] stayed behind, but there is always the respect of waiting for the other. And there is an ancient Medieval rule for pilgrims, for those that did pilgrimages to Shrines in the Middle Ages — they are also done today; we think of Santiago de Compostela, for instance — a rule that states: One must go in step with the one who is weakest, with the one who walks more slowly. “No, but I go first . . .” No. One must keep up, as John did: yes, he arrived first, but he waited for the other. This is a very beautiful thing, which we must learn, as humanity: to walk in step with persons that have another rhythm, or at least consider them and integrate them in our step.

Thank you. Thank you for all this. And now I would like to give a . . . but, let’s say it as it is: an address, so that for all the Associations, for all of you, it remains as a Message of this meeting with you.

The Holy Father’s Message

Dear Friends, Dear Sports Friends.

Tomorrow, May 21, the Castel Porziano International Meeting of Athletica “We Run Together – *Simul Currebant*, should have taken place. Olympic champions would have raced, for the first time, with Paralympic athletes, athletes with mental disabilities, and with refugees, migrants and prisoners, who would also be judges of the competition — all together and with the same dignity. A concrete testimony of what sports should be: namely, a “bridge” that unites women and men of different religions and cultures, promoting inclusion, friendship, solidarity and education, that is, a “bridge” of peace.

Tomorrow one won’t be able to run with the legs, but one can run with the heart. The ‘spirit’ of this Meeting, which is inclusive and solidary: to run together. And thus the very many athletes that have adhered — and that, with pleasure, I would have met personally — will make available some sports objects and experiences for a charity initiative. All the proceeds will go to the health personnel of the “Pope John XXIII” hospital in Bergamo and to the “Poliambulance Foundation” in Brescia, both symbols of the fight against the pandemic, which has affected the whole planet. It is an initiative to help and to thank the men and women nurses, and the hospital staff. They are heroes! They are all living their profession as a vocation, heroically, putting their own life at risk for others” (Cf. *John* 15:13).

I’m happy that Vatican Athletics is promoting this initiative, it is a reality that witnesses concretely, on the streets and amid the people, the solidary face of sport. The first gesture of Athletica Vaticana was that of receiving, as “honorary” athletes, some migrant young

people and a girl with a grave neurodegenerative disease. They came here today to meet with me.

Collaborating with Vatican Athletics in this initiative are the *Fiamme Gialle*, the Sports Group of the Finance Police, and the “Courtyard of the Gentiles,” a structure of the Pontifical Council for Culture, which promotes encounters and dialogue between believers and non-believers. They have all always shown particular sensitivity in addressing the real needs of people, in particular for families assisted by the Saint Martha Pediatric Clinic, active for almost one hundred years here in the Vatican. Collaborating together with them also, in this inclusive sports project for all, is the Fidal-Lazio Regional Committee.

I encourage you, dear sports friends, to live ever more your passion as an experience of unity and solidarity. In fact, the true values of sport are particularly important to face this time of pandemic and, especially, the difficult recovery. And I invite you to run together, with this spirit, the race of life. Thank you for all that you do.