

“Giving the best of yourself”

A SHORT SYNTHESIS OF THE DOCUMENT

The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life today offers to the sports community a Document that is useful for the *“construction of human and evermore authentic sports”*.

The attention paid to sports is not new in the Church; She has always shown a particular interest in all the activities where the person is in the center. In this sense, the Document’s title reveals the essence and the reason for the Church’s interest and commitment to sports.

Its center is, indeed, occupied by the human person, as a whole composed of body and spirit; each of his activities, including sports, is supported by a set of virtues and good qualities that allow him to rise and never fall into the dangers that can undermine every human activity.

The first concept, not recalled randomly, is that of “doing one’s very best,” cited several times by Pope Francis in many of his speeches, inviting especially young people to “not be satisfied with a tie” in life.

Sports rests on this value of commitment, of sacrifice, on the idea of exceeding one’s own limits by working hard, without cheating, pursuing the victory—but not at all costs—and, at the same time, learning to handle defeat without getting depressed.

The five sections that compose the document do not ambition to cover every aspect of the variegated activity of sports but want to offer a Christian perspective of sports to those who practice it, assist as spectators, and participate in it as technicians, arbiters, coaches, as well as to families, priests, and parishes.

The **first chapter** explains the reasons for Church’s interest in sports and the need for the pastoral ministry of sports, recalling that this relationship rests on three pillars: the physical effort needed for athletes to express themselves, the moral qualities that must support their engagement, the desire for peace, fraternity, and solidarity that sports must help to spread.

In the **second chapter**, the Document delineates the salient features of the sporting phenomenon and its contextualization in today’s society: sports as a kind of anthropological constant and a universal phenomenon that is compatible with almost all cultures.

In the **third chapter**, the theme of the meaning of sports for the person is deepened. Starting from considerations on topics that are already familiar in the Catholic discussion about sports (body - soul - spirit), it widens the perspective of the analysis to some qualities inherent in sports; sentiments that are part of the athlete’s DNA and that often are forgotten; the spirit of sacrifice, the sense of responsibility, respect for the rules, the ability to work in a team, joy, courage, solidarity, and harmony.

The **fourth chapter** is dedicated to the open challenges, to the desire to contribute, through sports, to the promotion of authentic values that could give each athlete the assets necessary for overcoming the many dangers with which modern sports are often faced today, e.g., doping, corruption, and violent spectators.

The **fifth and final chapter** is dedicated to the role of the Church as a protagonist on the path of humanization through sports. At home, in family, at school, on the training field, in the parish: there are so many places where a pastoral ministry of sports expressly aims at developing in each actor, whether participant or spectator, that set of good qualities and virtues that characterise a good athlete, a good citizen, and a good Christian.

For more information and to unload the integral Document: www.laityfamilylife.va

