

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ITALIAN GYMNASTICS FEDERATION**

Clementine Hall

28 September 2019

Dear friends!

Welcome to this meeting, which commemorates the 150th anniversary of your institution, founded to promote the culture of sport through physical education. I greet you all and thank your President for his words.

The presence of sports associations in society is not only functional for the organization of sporting activity. They are also called upon to foster a mentality which, through sport, promotes the integral development of the human person and social friendship. It is a question of understanding and living the practice of sport not only as a source of physical well-being but as an ideal of a courageous, positive and optimistic life. In this sense, sport becomes a formative experience that helps the new generations to cultivate the values of life: love for loyalty and justice, the taste for beauty and goodness, the search for freedom and solidarity.

Nowadays, the sports system sometimes appears to be conditioned by a logic of profit, by an exasperated competitive spirit and, unfortunately, also by violent attitudes. Three bad things: profit, exasperated competitiveness, and sometimes violent attitudes. And all three of these bad attitudes lack one thing: the amateur dimension of sport. When sport loses its amateur dimension, these attitudes come out, which lower the level of sport. Faced with these negative aspects, leaders, and athletes inspired by the Christian faith are able to bear witness to the humanizing power of the Gospel even in sports environments, and thus contribute to building a more fraternal society.

This is what I also wish you on this anniversary. May you always live sport with loyalty and a healthy competitive spirit, without losing your amateur inspiration. This will help you to face the challenges of life with courage and honesty, with joy and serene confidence in the future. I entrust your Federation to the Lord and bless you. Please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you!

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