

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS  
TO THE ITALIAN AND ARGENTINE RUGBY TEAMS**

*Clementine Hall  
Friday, 22 November 2013*

*Dear Friends, Good morning,*

I am pleased to see that various sporting events are being held between Italy and Argentina! This is good, it is a good sign, a sign also of a great tradition that continues between these two nations.

I thank you for coming to greet me with the help of the Ambassador and I also thank you for your charitable initiative.

Rugby is a very nice sport, and I am saying this because this is how I see it: it is a tough sport, there is body contact but there is no violence, there is great loyalty and great respect. Playing rugby is tiring, *no es un paseo*, it is not a leisurely walk! And I think this is useful to temper the character, the strength of willpower.

Another aspect that stands out is the balance between the group and the individual. There are the famous “scrums” that are at times shocking! The two teams engage, two compact teams push together against each other and balance each other out. And then there are individual moves, the sprints to score a try. That’s it, in rugby you run towards the “goal”! Such a beautiful word, so important. It makes us think about life, because our whole life moves toward a goal; and this search — the search for the goal — is strenuous, it demands a struggle, commitment. And it is important not to run alone! In order to arrive you must run together: the ball is passed from hand to hand and you move forward together until you reach the goal. Then you celebrate!

Perhaps my interpretation is not very technical but it is the way a bishop understands rugby! And as a bishop, I hope you put all of this into practice even off the pitch, practicing it in your lives.

I pray for you, I wish you the best. Pray also for me so that I too along with my coworkers may make a good team and may reach the goal!

Thank you and may you have a great match tomorrow!