

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE SPORTING ASSOCIATION OF LAZIO

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Thursday, 7 May 2015*

Friends of the Lazio Sports Society, good morning and welcome!

I greet you cordially. I thank the President General for the kind expressions he addressed to me in the name of the directors, the athletes, the sportsmen, the sympathizers and your families. In these 115 years of life, your multi-sports Society made an effort to keep alive the ideals that characterized the origins. In 1900, in fact, a group of young people took the initiative to create a sports society that would be accessible to youths of the people and that would hand down the moral and ethical values of sport. At that time organized sport was the prerogative of wealthy persons. The intent of that founding group was to spread it to all levels and all the social categories. I encourage you, therefore, to continue to be hospitable and to value the different talents. May your Sports Society always be an open house, where fraternity and harmony between persons can be experienced without discrimination.

Your moral and sports patrimony is expressed symbolically in a Latin motto, used by Sallustio: “*Concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maximae dilabuntur.*” It would be interesting to ask the translation to one of your boys ... But better not! In reality, it isn't difficult ... The motto says this: “In concord little things grow, in discord the greatest decline. ‘ It's beautiful! Your long history has confirmed this ancient sentence: born as a small track reality, in the course of the years Lazio has been enriched by different associated activities and is articulated in numerous sports sections. They enjoy the adherence of many members, athletes and supporters of all ages, united among themselves by the common Olympic spirit and the desire of reciprocal solidarity. And a merit of the Lazio multi-sport Society is that of having worked to give equal dignity to

all the sports. In Italy, as well as in my country, in Argentina, there is the risk of always speaking of soccer and neglecting the other sports. Instead, every sports discipline has its own value, not only physical or social, but also moral, in as much as it offers the possibility to persons, especially youngsters and young people, to grow in balance, in self-control, in sacrifice and in loyalty to others. And I want to stress the latter: loyalty! -- loyalty to others. The habit of betrayal is growing somewhat everywhere: "This doesn't suit me, I put it to one side." Loyalty! Sports make this grow so much.

The Bible teaches us that the human person is one whole, spirit and body. Therefore, I encourage you to always cultivate, together with sports activity, and athletics, the religious and spiritual dimension. Sometimes it happens that a boy or a girl, to train and compete, misses Mass, catechesis. But this isn't a good sign! It means that the scale of values has been lost. As also study, friendships and service to the poor must not be neglected. These things must not be neglected to do only one thing. No! Everything together -- thank God we have good examples of sports men and women, also great champions, who have never stopped living the faith and service to their neighbor. In reality, true sport fosters the building of a more fraternal and solidaristic world, contributing to the surmounting of situations of injustice and of human and social hardship.

While I congratulate your Sports Society for its long and useful activity, I exhort you to continue on this path of service to the aggregation of young people and of families. I invoke upon you and upon you dear ones the maternal protection of Mary and I bless you affectionately.

Now I ask the Lord to bless all of you.

(Blessing)

Thank you so much!