

**TRANSCRIPTION of the intervention of dr. Santiago Pérez de Camino, responsible of the Church and Sport Office – Dicastery for laity, Family and Life, at the Webinar on Sport organized by CEF (Episcopal Conference of France), held on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

First of all, I'd like to wish everyone a Happy Easter! And to thank the organization of this webinar for the invitation I have received. I thank the Family and Society Office of the French Bishops' Conference and all the members of the Church and Sport working group.

Today is an important day because it is the first event of this new stage of the sport pastoral ministry in France. I am really happy because as I will explain later, one of the goals of our office in the Holy See is to encourage and support the work of the sport ministry in dioceses and bishops' conferences around the world.

As it was mentioned before, I am from Spain, I am married with 3 children and I have been working in the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life since 2013 as the head of the of Church and Sport Office.

The office was created in 2004 at the express request of St. John Paul II at the Pontifical Council for the Laity (now Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life). It was established as a point of reference within the Holy See for all national and international sports organizations, such as the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee or the Council of Europe.

On the other hand, we act as an "observatory" for the world of sports at the service of evangelization. We try to organize and support initiatives that promote the virtues from a Christian point of view. Among these initiatives we try to leave a legacy in the research of the world of sport and faith with several meetings with experts and researchers. So the Church & Sport section has organized since 2004, four international seminars on different topics all connected in one point: the human being and his human experience of meeting with God through sports.

Today I would like to focus on the encouragement that, from the Holy See, we want to give to local churches to develop a pastoral care of sport. We know well that sport is a unique means of encounter between people of all kinds; of human formation in Christian values and virtues; of evangelization in society and in the world of sport itself, and of course a way to find holiness in our daily issues, whether is training, competing, etc.. These are not my ideas but Pope Francis' ideas, who in the preface to the Holy See's first document on sport, "Giving the Best of Yourself," published by our Dicastery, he wished to emphasize the importance of sport in the pastoral care of the Church and society.

The dioceses and Conferences of Bishops should get in touch with the world of sport in their countries or cities because it is a privileged way of going out to meet people. I use to say that sport is the "perfect tool of pre-evangelization". The Church feels at home in the world of sport because it promotes it and is aware of the benefits it brings to those who practice it in a holistic way. Sport also feels at home in the Church because it knows that it can contribute to making society a better world through the resources of parishes, oratories, and trainers and many personal initiatives that have a strong Christian identity.

The Document published almost 3 years ago is meant to be a guideline for those who want to live sport to the last consequences. Not only dioceses and parishes, but also national and regional sports bodies, and people who want to practice sport in a just, beautiful and virtuous way.

I would like to take this moment to thank specially Fr. Pascal Girard for his invaluable help in translating the document into French and to Madame Laurence Munoz for her collaboration in reviewing the document.

I am really happy that the Church in France has opened this meeting point with the world of sports, open to formation and evangelization, because the goal is nothing other than to bring Jesus Christ to all the people we meet. Whether we run, whether we swim, let's do it all for the glory of God... it's a "manipulated" quote from St. Paul but I think it's understandable...

Finally, I'd like to invite you to the next event that our Dicastery is already preparing for next year, in presence if our Lord and the pandemic allows it. It will be a study seminar on sport and fragility. A seminar designed for the sake of a deepened appreciation for the value of sports in the face of disability, marginalization; and for the fostering of greater inclusivity.

A second project for the next future is the creation of a work group made up of people from all over the world who works in the area of pastoral ministry within sports, as well as in fields that promote values through sports. This will be for the purpose of sharing best practices which can be reproduced in other places in the world, as well as for the sake of a deepened understanding of issues related to the future of sports and those who practice them.

Merci beaucoup pour ce moment et joyeux Pâques à tous!!