



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE "CORRIERE DELLO SPORT-STADIO"

Dear brothers and sisters,

Best wishes! A hundred years is an important milestone, a fine trophy to put in your cabinet! Even greater than that for the two million copies sold on the occasion of Italy's victory in the 2006 World Cup! You have had a great run in these hundred years; besides, among those who contributed to the birth of the newspaper was a certain Enzo Ferrari, who knew something about engines and victories!

I thank the Director Ivan Zazzaroni for sending me a beautiful letter about the centenary of the newspaper, and it is a pleasure to be close to you on these days of celebration.

If I think about sport, and my homeland, Argentina, before I even think of the great football facilities, like the *Bombonera*, I think of when, as children, we played football with a ball made of rags. So many champions started this way, playing with friends in a carefree way on improvised fields between houses, even in contexts of great poverty. How beautiful it is to experience the feeling of fraternity: you play, and you play together, and you know that you are opponents only on the field, never enemies. You learn the joy of victory and you know the sweat and effort it cost, and you also learn from defeat, trying to get back up again and learn from the mistakes made so as to try to overcome them the next time, or simply to accept your own difference and your limit: we are all precious and unique, but we are not perfect.

Some say that I am a fan of San Lorenzo, an Argentine team: it remains a secret, but there is something beautiful in the history of that team. When the boys who played in the street at the beginning of the twentieth century were looking for a safe place to play football, a priest descended from Italians, a Salesian, Don Lorenzo Massa, opened the doors of the oratory, and a beautiful adventure began from there. Even today we need spaces for sport, especially in the poorest and most isolated contexts, but above all we need adults who welcome children and

young people in an authentic way, who know how to listen to their dreams, who wish for a better future with them. Think about how here in Italy how much good has been done through the fields of parishes and oratories, and how many young people, now sporting champions, often remember that they started from the parish fields.

Your newspaper has a long history, and it intends to embrace the whole of Italy, for sporting events that concern it both within its borders and abroad: sport is one of the factors that make us feel like one people, such as when we stand up to sing the national anthem, at the stadium or in sports halls. How important it is to walk together, to feel part of a single family, and of a family of nations during the Olympics or the world or continental championships: in recent years we have still too often seen neighbouring peoples, or groups within the same countries, stand up against each other armed. Competition in sport is healthy, because it calls for patience, listening to the coach, respect for opponents, rules and referees, and coordination with one's teammates: in the world, on the other hand, the aim is often to destroy the opponent, to make one's own rules, to reject those who want to moderate the confrontation between the parties according to international law. Spreading a healthy sports culture in this sense means nurturing humanity in its most beautiful and authentic values, and for this I thank you.

Although unfortunately in recent years we have witnessed episodes of intolerance, which must be condemned, I am sure that there are many more examples in which sport has been able to “team up”, without race, class, or religious denomination being obstacles or barriers: I encourage you to foster this climate of authentic and welcoming humanity. We must reject any mindset of exclusion and violence, and for this we know that words have their value, to educate in what is good and beautiful, rather than to destroy. A newspaper article, even a sports article, can do a lot of good, but it can also damage and foment a climate of mistrust: I urge you not to be like this, though!

On the subject of acceptance and integral human promotion: for organizational reasons alone it is not possible to hold the Olympics and the Paralympics at the same time. In the recent editions in Paris we rejoiced at the many successes of incredible boys and girls: for some of them the gold medal was life-giving, because of how they were able to overcome, thanks to their inner strength and the help of everyone, the challenges of their disability. Their races are a hymn to life! May your newspaper tell of victories and defeats, but be a way of thinking and living of sport as a hymn to life!

Thank you for what you are and for what you do. Do not forget to pray for me.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 19 October 2024

FRANCIS

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