

Pope Francis on Sports as Ministry

“Sports in the community can be a great missionary tool, where the Church is close to every person to help them become better and to meet Jesus Christ,” he told the enthusiastic crowds.

“He said that to belong to a sports team “means to reject all forms of selfishness and isolation – it is an opportunity to meet and be with others, to help each other, to compete in mutual esteem and grow in brotherhood.”

“Everyone who wants to join in sports should be welcomed, he said, “not just the best, but everyone, with the advantages and limitations that everyone has, indeed, focusing on the most disadvantaged, as did Jesus.”

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-encourages-athletes-to-play-for-the-church/>

In the book, “Pope Francis: His Life in His Own Words,” Pope Francis says: “Together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification. To put it another way: people who work must take the time to relax, to be with their families, to enjoy themselves, read, listen to music, play a sport.”

“May sport always promote a culture of encounter.”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/17/inter-religious-match-for-peace_n_5591752.html

“Sport is not only a form of entertainment, but also -- and above all I would say -- a tool to communicate values that promote the good that is in humans and help build a more peaceful and fraternal society.”

Francis said football teaches three lessons that can promote peace and solidarity around the world: the need to train and work hard to reach goals, the importance of fair play and teamwork, and the need to respect and honor opponents. “To win, we must overcome individualism, selfishness, all forms of racism, intolerance and manipulation of people,” he said. He said being “greedy” in football, as in life, is an obstacle.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/12/pope-francis-world-cup_n_5487851.html

I am aware of and appreciate your commitment and your dedication to promoting sports as an educational experience. You, young people and adults working with the little ones, are, through your precious service, teachers in every respect. This is a cause for just pride and it is especially a responsibility! Sports are a means for education. I find there are three paths for young people, for children and little ones. The path of education, the path of sports and the path of work, when there are jobs for young people to start with! If there are these three paths, I assure you there wouldn't be dependencies: no drugs, no alcohol! Why? Because school leads you forward, sports leads you forward and work leads you forward.”

“It is important, dear boys and girls, that sports remain a game! Only by remaining a game will it do good for the body and spirit. And as sportsmen, I invite you not only to play, like you already do, but there is something more: challenge yourself in the game of life like you are in the game of sports. Challenge yourself in the quest for good, in both Church and society, without fear, with courage and enthusiasm.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/june/documents/papa-francesco_20140607_societa-sportive.html

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“In sports clubs one learns how to accept. One accepts every athlete who wishes to join, they accept one another with simplicity and kindness.”

“And you, boys and girls, who experience joy when you receive your jerseys, the sign of belonging to your team, you are called to behave like true athletes, worthy of the jerseys you wear. I hope you can merit them every day through your commitment as well as your hard work.”

“To belong to a sports club means to reject every form of selfishness and isolation, it is an opportunity to encounter and be with others, to help one another, to compete in mutual esteem and to grow in brotherhood.”
“I recommend that everyone get to play, not just the best, but everyone, with the advantages and the limitations that each has, indeed, focusing on the disadvantaged, as Jesus did. And I encourage you to carry on with your commitment through sports for children from the outskirts of cities; in addition to footballs, you can give them reasons for hope and trust.”

“If there is no sports club, something is missing. Yet a sports club like this needs to be well executed, in a way that’s consistent with the Christian community. If it isn’t consistent, better not to have one! Sports in a community can be an optimal missionary tool, where the Church comes close to each person and helps him or her to excel and to encounter Jesus Christ.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/june/documents/papa-francesco_20140607_societa-sportive.html

“The bond between the Church and the world of sports is a beautiful reality that has strengthened over time, for the Ecclesial Community sees in sports a powerful instrument for the integral growth of the human person. Engaging in sports, in fact, rouses us to go beyond ourselves and our own self interests in a healthy way; it trains the spirit in sacrifice and, if it is organized well, it fosters loyalty in interpersonal relations, friendship, and respect for rules. It is important that those involved at the various levels of sports promote human and religious values which form the foundation of a just and fraternal society. This is possible because the language of sports is universal; it extends across borders, language, race, religion and ideology; it possesses the capacity to unite people, together, by fostering dialogue and acceptance. This is a very valuable resource!”

“I wish to encourage institutions and organizations like your own to propose, especially to the younger generations, sports initiatives as a formation for peace, sharing and coexistence among peoples. Sporting events are characterized by unity and not division! Build bridges, not walls.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/november/documents/papa-francesco_20131123_delegati-comitati-olimpici-europei.html

“In sports competitions you are called to demonstrate that sport which expresses the joy of life, of games, is a celebration, and as such it must be appreciated through the recovery of its gratuitousness, its capacity to foster the bonds of friendship and strengthen openness between people. Also with your daily behavior, full of faith and spirituality, humanity and altruism, you can render testimony to the ideals of peaceful civil and social coexistence, for the edification of a civilization founded on love, on solidarity and on peace.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/september/documents/papa-francesco_20140901_partita-calcio-interreligiosa.html

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“Let me explain: during the game, when you are out on the pitch, you display beauty, generosity and camaraderie. If a match lacks these qualities it loses force, even if the team wins. There is no room for individualism; team coordination is paramount.”

“Football, like some other disciplines, has become big business! Work to prevent it losing its character as a sport.”

“I ask you all to live sport as a gift from God, an opportunity to make good use of your talents but this is also a responsibility. Dear players, I would like especially to call to mind that with your conduct, both on and off the pitch, in life you are a point of reference. Last Sunday I chatted on the telephone with some young people of a group, who wanted to greet me, and I spoke to them for half an hour and naturally their preferred topic of conversation was tomorrow’s match. They spoke of some of you and they said: “No, I like him for this and this reason or that”. You are an example, a reference point. The good you do is impressive. With your conduct, the way you play, your values, you do good people watch you, take advantage of this to sow goodness. Even if you do not realize it, for many people who watch you with admiration, you are a role model for better or for worse. Be aware of this and be an example of loyalty, respect and altruism. You are also builders of concord and social peace of which are all in such great need. You are a point of reference for many young people and a living model of real values. I have faith in all the good that you can do among boys and girls.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/august/documents/papa-francesco_20130813_squadre-nazionali-argentina-italia.html

“Sport fosters contact and relationships with people who come from diverse cultures and walks of life. It accustoms us to live and welcome differences, to turn them into a precious opportunity for mutual enrichment and discovery. Above all, sport is a precious opportunity to recognize one another as brothers and sisters on the journey, to foster the culture of inclusion”

“May sport be for you all a gym in which to train daily, to measure up to yourself and to others, a gym that gives you the opportunity to know new people and places and to help you feel an active part of society. May you be able to experience, also through sports, the closeness of God and the friendship of brothers and sisters.”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141004_atleti-paralimpici.html



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