



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE DELEGATIONS OF THE ITALIAN SOCCER TEAMS JUVENTUS AND LAZIO***

*Clementine Hall
Tuesday, 16 May 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear friends,

I am pleased to meet you on the eve of the final match of the “Coppa Italia” tournament. I thank the president of the Italian Football Federation (Federazione Italiana Gioco Calcio) for his kind words, and I congratulate the two teams, Juventus and Lazio, which aside from achieving excellent results, are well-loved among sportspeople. This commits you even further to bearing witness to the authentic values of sport.

I wish, therefore, to return briefly with you to the importance of sport in our time. Considering its appeal and the effect that professional football has on people, especially the young, you bear a considerable responsibility. Those who are considered “champions” easily become role models. Therefore, every match is a test of balance, of self-mastery, of respect for the rules. Those who, by their behaviour, know how to give an example of all this, become an example for their admirers. It is what I hope for each one of you: to become witnesses of loyalty, honesty, harmony and humanity.

At times in stadiums, unfortunately, we see episodes of violence which disturb the smooth running of the matches and the healthy enjoyment of the people. I hope that, to the extent that it is in your power, you will always be able to help sporting activity to remain as such, thanks to the personal commitment of all involved, and to be a reason for cohesion between athletes and all of society.

I offer you my heartfelt thanks for your visit and I wish you a truly good match! I invoke upon you, your families and your loved ones the Lord’s blessing. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

**Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office, 16 May 2018*

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