



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF LAZIO SPORTS CLUB

Friday, 27 October 2000

1. Welcome, "bianco-celesti" friends of Lazio, on the 100th anniversary of your club's foundation! This is not the first time that I have had the opportunity to welcome athletes and supporters of various clubs here in the Vatican. However, it does not often happen that I meet such a numerous group of members of a same sports family. Thank you for your kind visit, which enables me to relive the atmosphere and climate of great sporting events, filled with peaceful relaxation and joyful brotherhood.

I cordially greet you all. I greet the representatives of the various disciplines and the spiritual assistants. I especially thank Mr Renzo Nostini, General Manager of the Lazio Sports Club, for the kind words that he addressed to me on behalf of the managers, athletes, sportsmen and sportswomen, supporters and your families. In his words I gathered the meaning of your visit and the enthusiasm of your club, which in these 100 years has written a very interesting page in the book of Italian sport.

2. During the Holy Year of 1900, on 9 January, a promising club with a significant moral and sport tradition was born. This was symbolically expressed in the Latin motto "*concordia parva crescunt* - little things grow with harmony". Events have confirmed the ancient axiom: over the years, Lazio has become a sports club with 28 sections linked by their common Olympic spirit and by a desire for mutual solidarity. I am certain that, by spurring you to rediscover the ideals of the past, this centenary will be a fitting occasion for also emphasizing the ethical-religious dimension, essential for the full maturation of the human person. It is precisely for this reason that you wished to include among your various celebrations a spiritual encounter within the context of the Jubilee.

I would like here to quote a well-known expression of the Apostle Paul, which is well suited to your various amateur and competitive activities: "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things" (1 Cor 9: 25). Actually, without balance, self-control, moderation and the ability to interact honestly with others, an athlete is unable to understand the full meaning of physical activity, which is meant to strengthen not only the body but the mind and heart.

3. Sometimes, unfortunately, incidents occur in the sports world that degrade the real meaning of competitiveness and affect not only athletes but the community itself. In particular, the passionate support of one's team must never reach the point of offending persons or damaging the community's property. Every athletic competition must always preserve the character of healthy and relaxing recreation. It is of these values that the Olympic colours - the blue and white - speak. These are the colours that characterize your flag and they must always be kept in view with a sharp and penetrating eye, like that of the eagle emblazoned on your crest.

Dear friends, during its 100 years of life, the Lazio club has offered numerous young people and adults an opportunity to test their strength against the demanding challenges of sport. This is demonstrated by the many Italian and international distinctions received by athletes who were formed within your structures. But it is only right also to remember the practical contribution your association has made to the vast fields of solidarity and volunteer work. In this regard, a special mention must be made of the work offered by your members on the occasion of the recent, unforgettable World Youth Day and the concrete assistance given to the Jubilee of Families.

While I express my appreciation of the good work accomplished, I urge you to continue on this path of service to youth, families and all society.

With these wishes, I invoke on you the maternal protection of Mary and bless you all with affection.

© Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana