



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 4 October 2014*

Video

Dear Athletes, Dear Friends, Good morning,

I thank you for your presence — so many and so festive! — and I thank the President of the Italian Paralympic Committee for his courteous words.

You have come from many parts of the world, and each one of you brings his or her own experience of sports and above all your experience as men and women: you bring achievements, goals reached through so much hard work, despite the many difficulties that had to be faced. Each one of you is a witness of how important it is to live such joy and toil in the encounter with others, to be able to share in their “race”, to find a group of friends who will lend you a hand and where you extend a hand to others. And like this each of you manages to give your best!

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 and reject the culture of waste.

All this is felt even more in your experience, because the disability that you experience in some aspect of your physical make up, through the practice of sports and healthy competition, is transformed into a message of encouragement for all those who are in situations similar to yours. It becomes an invitation to commit all our energy to do beautiful things together, overcoming the

barriers that we may meet, and above all those that are within us.

Your testimony, dear athletes, is a great sign of hope. It is proof of the fact that there is unimaginable potential in every person, which can be developed through trust and solidarity. God the Father is the first to know this! God knows your hearts perfectly: he knows everything. He is the first to know it! He knows us better than anyone, and looks at us with confidence. He loves us as we are, and makes us grow according to what we can become. Thus, in your effort for sports without barriers, for a world without exclusion, you are not alone! God our Father is with you!

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.

I thank you for this meeting. I bless all of you and your loved ones. And, please, remember to pray for me! Thank you.

Now I ask the Lord to bless all of you, bless your whole life, bless your journey and bless your hearts.