



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE MILAN SOCCER TEAM

Saturday, 12 May 1979 Dear Members of the Milan Football Team! Your visit gives me great joy: that of meeting young athletes who, on the eve of the last football match of the year at the Olympic Stadium of Rome and with the Shield of the 1979 Italian Championship now in their grasp, have wished to pay homage to the Pope to give also a moral and spiritual meaning to the triumph they are preparing to celebrate. I greet you cordially, dear young men, and I thank you for your presence, together with your President, your sports manager and your trainer. Seeing you, I cannot but express once more my regard for all sportsmen and for sport in its various forms, and at the same time the esteem in which the Church holds this noble human activity. The Church, as you know, moreover, approves and encourages sport, seeing in it a form of gymnastics of the body and of the spirit, a training for social relations based on respect for others and for one's own person and an element of social cohesion, which also fosters friendly relations in the international field. The dignity of sport rises to this height, when it is inspired by healthy principles and excludes any excess of risk in the athlete and of disorderly passion in the public, which becomes excited over sporting matters! I think I am not mistaken in recognizing in you this potential of civil and Christian virtues. In a world in which we sometimes behold the painful presence of young people who are weary, marked by sadness and negative experiences, be for them wise friends, expert guides and trainers not only on sports fields but also on the ways that lead to the goals of the true values of life. In this way to the satisfactions of competitive sport you will add merits of a spiritual nature, offering society a valuable contribution of moral health. You will thus give the Church the joy of seeing in you strong (cf. 1 Jn 2:14), loyal and generous sons. Beloved brothers, these are the feelings and wishes your exuberant youth has aroused in my spirit. May the Lord Jesus grant you that "goal", that is, that final target, which is the true and ultimate destiny of life. May you be sustained for this purpose by my blessing, which I willingly extend to all your families, friends and admirers. © Copyright 1979 Libreria Editrice Vaticana
