



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY TRINITY

JUBILEE OF SPORT

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV

Saint Peter's Basilica

Sunday, 15 June 2025

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the first reading we heard these words: “Thus says the wisdom of God: The Lord possessed me, the beginning of his ways, the forerunner of his prodigies of long ago ... When the Lord established the heavens I was there ... then was I beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the human race” (*Prov* 8: 22, 27, 30-31) For Saint Augustine, the Trinity and wisdom are intimately connected. Divine wisdom is revealed in the Most Holy Trinity, and wisdom always leads us to truth.

While we are celebrating today the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we are also marking the Jubilee of Sport. This combination of *Trinity* and *Sport* is somewhat unusual, yet the juxtaposition is not inappropriate. Every good and worthwhile human activity is in some way a reflection of God’s infinite beauty, and sport is certainly one of these. For God is not immobile and closed in on himself, but activity, communion, a dynamic relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which opens up to humanity and to the world. Theologians speak of *perichoresis*: the life of God is a kind of “dance”: a dance of mutual love.

This dynamism of God’s inner life gives birth to life. We were created by a God who finds joy in giving existence to his creatures, who “delights” in our world, as the we heard in the first reading

(cf. *Prov* 8:30-31). Some Fathers of the Church go so far as to speak of a *Deus ludens*, a God who “plays” (cf. SAINT SALONIUS OF GENEVA, *In Parabolas Salomonis expositio mystica*; SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Carmina*, I, 2, 589). Sport can thus help us to encounter the Triune God, because it challenges us to relate to others and with others, not only outwardly but also, and above all, interiorly. Otherwise, sport becomes nothing more than an empty competition of inflated egos.

Here in Italy, spectators at sporting events often cheer athletes on by shouting out, “*Dai!*” (Come one!). The Italian word, however, means, literally, “*Give!*” This can give us cause to reflect. Sports are not only about physical achievements, however extraordinary, but also about giving of ourselves, putting ourselves “in play”. It is about giving of ourselves for others – for our personal improvement, for our athletic supporters, for our loved ones, our coaches and colleagues, for the greater public, and even for our opponents. Being a “good sport” is more important than winning or not. [Saint John Paul II](#) – himself, as we know, a sportsman – put it this way: “Sport is joy of life, a game, a celebration. As such, it must be fostered... by recovering its sheer gratuity, its ability to forge bonds of friendship, to encourage dialogue and openness towards others... quite apart from the harsh laws of production and consumption and all other purely utilitarian and hedonistic approaches to life” (*Homily for the Jubilee of Sports*, 12 April 1984).

From this standpoint, let us reflect on three particular things that make sport, nowadays, a precious means for training in human and Christian virtues.

First, in a society marked by *solitude*, where radical individualism has shifted the emphasis from “us” to “me”, resulting in a deficit of real concern for others, sport – especially team sports – teaches the value of cooperating, working together and sharing. These, as we said, are at the very heart of God’s own life (cf. *Jn* 16:14-15). Sport can thus become an important means of reconciliation and encounter: between peoples and within communities, schools, workplaces and families.

Second, in an increasingly *digital society*, where technology brings distant people closer together, yet often creates distances between those who are physically close, sport proves a valuable and concrete means of bringing individuals together, providing a healthier sense of the body, of space, effort and real time. It counters the temptation to escape into virtual worlds and it helps to preserve a healthy contact with nature and with real life, where genuine love is experienced (cf. 1 *Jn* 3:18).

Third, in our *competitive society*, where it seems that only the strong and winners deserve to live, sport also teaches us how to lose. It forces us, in learning the art of losing, to confront one of the deepest truths of our human condition: our fragility, our limitations and our imperfections. This is important, because it is through the experience of these limits that we open our hearts to hope. Athletes who never make mistakes, who never lose, do not exist. Champions are not perfectly functioning machines, but real men and women, who, when they fall, find the courage to get back

on their feet. [Saint John Paul II](#) hit the mark when he said that Jesus is “the true athlete of God” because he defeated the world not by strength, but by the fidelity of love (cf. [Homily at the Mass for the Jubilee of Sportsmen and Sportswomen](#), 29 October 2000).

It is no coincidence that sport has played a significant role in the lives of many saints in our day, both as a personal discipline and as a means of evangelization. We can think of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, the patron saint of athletes, who will be canonized later this year on 7 September. His straightforward and luminous life reminds us that, just as no one is born a champion, no one is born a saint. It is daily training in love that brings us closer to final victory (cf. *Rom* 5:3-5) and enables us to contribute to the building of a new world. [Saint Paul VI](#) also observed this, twenty years after the end of the Second World War, when he reminded the members of a Catholic athletic association how much sports had helped to restore peace and hope in a society devastated by the consequences of war (cf. *Address to the members of the C.S.I.*, 20 March 1965). He went on to say: “Your efforts are directed at the formation of a new society..., in the recognition that sport, by virtue of the sound educational values it promotes, can be a most useful means for the spiritual elevation of the human person, the primary and indispensable condition for an orderly, peaceful and constructive society.”

Dear athletes, the Church entrusts you with a beautiful mission: to reflect in all your activities the love of the Triune God, for your own good and for that of your brothers and sisters. Carry out this mission with enthusiasm: as athletes, as trainers, as associations and groups, and within your families. [Pope Francis](#) liked to point out that the Gospel presents the Virgin Mary as ever active, on the move, even “running” (cf. *Lk* 1:39), ever ready, as mothers are, to set out at a sign from God to help her children (cf. [Address to the Volunteers of World Youth Day](#), 6 August 2023). Let us ask her to accompany our effort and enthusiasm, and to guide it always toward the greatest victory of all: the prize of eternal life on that playing-field where games will never end and our joy will be complete (cf. *1 Cor* 9:24-25; *2 Tim* 4:7-8).