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Press Conference to present a new Document of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, entitled “Giving the best of yourself”, on the Christian perspective of sport and of the human person

At 11.00 this morning, at the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present a new Document of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, entitled “*Giving the best of yourself*”, on the Christian perspective of sports and the human person.

The speakers were His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life; Antonella Stelitano, researcher and member of the Italian Societies for History of Sport; Fr. Patrick Kelly, S.J., associate professor of theology, University of Seattle, United States of America; and Santiago Pérez de Camino, head of the Church and Sport Office of the same Dicastery.

The press conference was also attended by collaborators and experts from the same Dicastery who have contributed to the revision of the Document: Mr. Daniele Pasquini, president of CSI Roma; Professor Dries Vanysacker, ordinary professor of theology at the *KU Leuven* in Belgium; Dr. Alexandre Borges de Magalhaes, writer and general coordinator of the Christian Life Movement Peru; and Dr. Manoj Sunny, former Olympic athlete in India and founder of the *Jesus Youth* movement.

The following is the intervention by Cardinal Kevin Farrell:

Intervention by Cardinal Kevin Farrell

Today we are here to present the Document of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life – which I have the honour of chairing – on the Christian perspective of sport and of the human person, together with the Message Pope Francis wished to address to all sports lovers on the occasion of the presentation of this text. I wish to thank first and foremost the Holy Father for his words, and all those who have collaborated with willingness and skill on the revision of the document, some of whom are present here.

The Document stems from a project already undertaken by the then Pontifical Council for the Laity, to which

Saint John Paul II had entrusted the task of being a point of reference for sporting associations at international and national level, and of inspiring in the local Churches a renewed awareness of the pastoral care of sporting environments.

The Document that we are presenting does not claim to respond to all the questions and challenges that the world of sport poses today, but rather seeks to “recount” the relationship between sport and the experience of faith, and to offer a Christian vision of sporting practice.

The title “Giving the best of yourself” refers to Pope Francis’ address to sporting associations on 7 June 2014 in Saint Peter’s Square, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*. However, the expression has been used by the Holy Father also on other occasions, such as for example during the meeting with young participants in the pre-Synodal meeting last April: “You come from many parts of the world and you bring with you a great variety of peoples, cultures and also religions: you are not all Catholics and Christians, not even all believers, but you are certainly all inspired by the desire to give the best of yourselves”. And again, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*: “The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts God has placed in their hearts” (11).

“*Giving the best of yourself*” is without doubt an expression that can be applied both in the field of sport and in that of faith. On the one hand, in fact, it recalls the effort, the sacrifice that a sportsman must take on as a constant in his or her life to obtain a victory or simply to arrive at the goal. But also in the area of faith, we are called upon to give the best of ourselves to arrive at holiness, which as the Pope has shown in *Gaudete et exsultate*, is a universal call, addressed to all, including sportspeople. It is not by chance that the Holy Father, in the Message that accompanies this Document, writes that “sports can be an instrument of encounter, formation, mission, and sanctification”.

I would like to highlight, then, that it is the first Document of the Holy See on sport. While indeed it is true that there exist addresses and messages from various Pontiffs to the world of sport, and numerous conventions have been organized by the Holy See in this regard, there did not yet exist a Document that gathered together the thought and wishes of the Catholic Church in relation to sporting practice, at both professional level and in the amateur context.

The Document is divided into five chapters: the relationship between the Church and sport (chapter 1); a description of the sporting phenomenon with a close look at the human person (chapters 2 and 3); some of today’s challenges that sport must face up to (chapter 4); and the Church and the pastoral approach to sport (chapter 5).

I would like to draw your attention, for a key reading of the Document, to the many citations from the Magisterium on sport from Pope Pius X up to Pope Francis. They are citations drawn from addresses, greetings and homilies which certainly may help to develop a pastoral approach to sport with regard to its promotion and formation.

I conclude, underlining the educational and pastoral nature of the Document. It is not a text for scholars or researches, but rather a reflection on the state of sport today, accompanied by indications and suggestions that may undoubtedly be useful not only for the Episcopal Conferences and the dioceses to develop a pastoral approach to sport, but also to amateur clubs and associations, and individual athletes, for reflecting on Christian life and on the way of practising sport.
