



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE BOLOGNA SOCCER TEAM**

*Saturday, 9 December 1978*

*Dear young sportsmen!*

I am particularly happy to receive you and bid a cordial welcome to you, players of the Bologna football team, to your directors and to the members of your families, who have wished to take part in this happy meeting.

I am grateful to you for your presence which recalls to my mind unforgettable memories of the years spent with young sport-lovers, with whom I have experienced moments charged with human and spiritual joy.

You know how the young are the object of the predilection of the Church and of the Pope, who loves to meet them in order to give and receive enthusiasm and strength, but you young sportsmen have a special place, because you offer, in a preeminent way, a spectacle of fortitude, loyalty and self-control, and also because you have to a marked extent the sense of honour, friendship and brotherly solidarity: virtues which the Church promotes and exalts.

Continue, dear young men, to give the best of yourselves in sports competitions, always remembering that the competitive spirit of the sportsman, though so noble in itself, must not be an end in itself, but must be subordinated to the far more noble requirements of the spirit. Therefore, while I repeat to you: be good sportsmen, I also say to you: be good citizens in family and social life, and, even more, be good Christians, who are able to give a superior meaning to life, in such a way as to be able to put into practice what the Apostle Paul said about athletes to Christians of his time: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it ... They (athletes) do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (I Cor 9:24-25).

With these sentiments, I express to you all my greeting and my encouragement, which I wish to confirm with a special Blessing.

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