

# *His Holiness Leo XIV*

## *Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity*

Jubilee of Sport

15 June 2025

St Peter's Basilica – Vatican City

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the First Reading we heard these words: “Thus speaks the Wisdom of God: ‘The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, before all his deeds, at the origin. [...] When he established the heavens, I was there; [...] I was beside him, like a master worker, and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing on the surface of his earth, and delighting 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.

Today, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we are also in the midst of the Jubilee of Sport. The pairing “Trinity and sport” is not exactly a common one—yet the connection is far from misplaced. Every good human activity bears within it a reflection of God's beauty, and sport certainly belongs among these. After all, God is not static, closed in on Himself. He is communion, a living relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which opens outward towards humanity and the world. Theology refers to this reality as *perichoresis*, meaning “dance”: a dance of mutual love.

It is from this divine dynamism that life springs forth. We were created by a God who rejoices and delights in giving existence to His creatures, who “plays”, as the First Reading reminds us (cf. Prov 8:30–31). Some of the Church Fathers even speak, boldly, of a *Deus ludens*—a God who delights in play (cf. St Salomon of Geneva, *Mystical Exposition of the Proverbs of Solomon*; St Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmina*, I, 2, 589). That is why sport can help us encounter the Triune God: because it requires a movement of the self towards the other, not only on the outside, but also—more importantly—within. Without this, sport becomes a barren contest of egos.

Let us think of an expression commonly used in Italian to cheer on athletes during competitions. Spectators shout: “Dai!” (“Come on!”). We may not think about it, but it is a beautiful imperative—it is the imperative form of the verb “to give”. And this makes us reflect: it is not only about giving a physical performance—however extraordinary—but about giving oneself, about putting oneself on the line. It is about offering oneself for others—for one's personal growth, for supporters, for loved ones, for coaches, collaborators, the public, even one's opponents—and if one is truly a sportsperson, this holds true regardless of the result.

Saint John Paul II—himself a sportsman, as we know—put it this way: “Sport is joy of life, a game, a celebration, and should be valued as such [...] by recovering its gratuitousness, its capacity to forge bonds of friendship, to promote dialogue and openness towards others, [...] beyond the harsh laws of production and consumption and any other purely utilitarian or hedonistic conception of life” (Homily for the Jubilee of Sportspeople, 12 April 1984).

From this perspective, let us consider three aspects that make sport today a precious tool for human and Christian formation.

Firstly, in a society marked by loneliness, where exaggerated individualism has shifted the centre from “us” to “me”, ultimately ignoring the other, sport—especially team sport—teaches the value of collaboration, of walking together, of sharing, which, as we have said, lies at the very heart of God’s life (cf. Jn 16:14–15). It can thus become a powerful means of reconciliation and encounter: between peoples, within communities, schools and workplaces, and even within families.

Secondly, in a society that is increasingly digital—where technology, though it connects people who are far away, often distances those who are close—sport values the concreteness of being together, the sense of the body, of space, of effort, of real time. Thus, against the temptation to escape into virtual worlds, sport helps us stay grounded in nature and in real life—the only place where love is lived (cf. 1 Jn 3:18).

Thirdly, in a competitive society, where it can seem that only the strong and successful deserve to live, sport also teaches us how to lose, confronting us—through the art of defeat—with one of the deepest truths of our human condition: fragility, limitation, imperfection. And this is important, because it is through the experience of fragility that we open ourselves to hope. The athlete who never fails, who never loses, simply does not exist. Champions are not flawless machines, but men and women who, even when they fall, find the courage to rise again.

Let us recall once more the words of Saint John Paul II, who said that Jesus is “the true athlete of God”, for He conquered the world not with strength, but through the fidelity of love (cf. Homily at the Mass for the Jubilee of Sportspeople, 29 October 2000).

It is no coincidence that in the lives of many modern saints, sport played a significant role—both as a personal practice and as a means of evangelisation. Let us think of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of sportspeople, who will be canonised next 7 September. His simple and radiant life reminds us that just as no one is born a champion, no one is born a saint. It is the daily training in love that brings us closer to the final victory (cf. Rom 5:3–5), and enables us to work for the building up of a new world.

Saint Paul VI affirmed this twenty years after the Second World War, reminding members of a Catholic sports association how much sport had contributed to restoring peace and hope in a society shaken by the war’s aftermath (cf. Address to members of the C.S.I., 20 March 1965). He said: “It is the formation of a new society that your efforts are directed towards: [...] in the awareness that sport, with the sound formative elements it promotes, can be a most useful tool for the spiritual uplift of the human person, which is the first and indispensable condition of a society that is ordered, peaceful, and constructive” (ibid.).

Dear athletes, the Church entrusts to you a beautiful mission: to be, in your activities, a reflection of the love of the Triune God, for your own good and that of your brothers and sisters. Let yourselves be drawn into this mission with enthusiasm: as athletes, as trainers, as organisations, as groups, as families.

Pope Francis loved to highlight how Mary, in the Gospel, appears active, on the move, even “in haste” (cf. Lk 1:39), ready—like all good mothers—to respond at God’s slightest call and hasten to help her children (cf. Address to the World Youth Day Volunteers, 6 August 2023). Let us ask her to accompany our efforts and our leaps forward, and to always direct them towards what is best—until we reach the greatest victory: eternity, the “infinite playing field”, where the game shall never end and joy will be complete (cf. 1 Cor 9:24–25; 2 Tim 4:7–8).