



The Holy See

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM OF CROATIA

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 5 June 2024

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers, sisters,

I am pleased to receive you and to welcome you, managers and players of the National Football Team of Croatia.

In the last World Cup Championship you took third place: well done! That event, which also received much criticism for certain aspects, in any case confirmed that football is a global phenomenon capable of involving an enormous number of people, of stirring emotions, collective feelings. I can testify to this, since I come from a country where all of this is lived to the maximum.

But you play football, you form a team, and you have the honour of representing your nation. This *being a team* is an aspect of sport I like to emphasize, because it is a metaphor for social life, in the various environments in which one lives and works together with others. Individual actions are important, imagination, creativity... But if individualism prevails, then the entire dynamic is ruined and the aim is not reached. Thank you for giving us an example of how to be a team!

And there are many other values “at play”: think of the sense of honour, friendship between you and fraternity, loyalty and self-control. In this regard, never forget that fans, especially the young, mirror themselves in you: your role goes beyond the sporting sphere and becomes a model of a successful life and success. It is therefore important for you to cultivate spiritual and human qualities, so that you can set a good example.

Dear friends, I thank you for your visit and wish you every success in your sporting and social activities. I bless you and ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.

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