

June 15, 2025

Sports, Faith, and the Jubilee Year of Hope

Reflection by
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At the beginning of every season, in any Sport, there is excitement and hope for the coming season. Sport is built on hope — hope of a good season, a good game, a good play. Hope helps drive the competitive desire of most athletes. Hope to make a team, hope to play in a championship, and ultimately, hope to win that championship.

In Sport, we encounter the beauty and blessings of God's creation. Sportsmanship is also an important part of Sport and the encounter with God's blessings. Sportsmanship is to play free and open to allow every athlete to use their talents to the best of their ability. Coaches and teammates working together for a common goal show us the depth of human intelligence, skill, cooperation, and determination; using God's gifts to shine forth in Sport.

Sport therefore can help us in our pilgrimage journey to heaven. If we recognize God's gifts among us and the use of those gifts in the beauty of Sport, we can be drawn closer to God. Sport is not always easy, and it is not always a positive experience. But even the difficulties and setbacks can refocus the athlete towards improvement. Building upon successes and failures points to a greater good and a greater goal. Hence the need for the athlete not only to rely on natural God given talent and hard work, but also the grace that God gives us for patience, perseverance, and endurance. Hope is at the heart of this. Hope for a better play, for a better game,

for a better season. All of this can be accomplished with the grace of God.

In his audience with the Naples Football Club on May 27th, Pope Leo XIV addressed the team that won the league title. He used the opportunity to comment on the moral dimension of Sport. "Unfortunately," he said, 'when sport becomes a business, it risks losing the values that make it educational, and it can even become harmful from that point of view.' This is particularly important when it comes to teenagers, the Pope noted, and he appealed to parents and coaches to 'pay close attention to the moral quality of the sporting experience. 'What's at stake', he warned, 'is the human development of young people'" (Joseph Tulloch, Vatican News).

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, let us open our eyes and our hearts to the beauty of Sport, which leads us to thankfulness for the gifts and graces of God. Sport is more than championships, trophies, or medals. All athletes doing their best show forth God's blessings to them in their competition.

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