

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE FIORENTINA AND
NAPOLI SOCCER TEAMS AND TO A DELEGATION OF THE
SOCCER FEDERATION AND OF THE SERIE A LEAGUE**

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 2 May 2014*

Dear Friends, welcome!

This meeting has “expanded” a little. In addition to the Fiorentina and Napoli teams — finalists in the Italian Cup — present are also the senior executives of the Football Federation and of the Serie A League. I thank you for this visit and also for its expansion! It seems to me that you have a responsibility, a responsibility to society. In Italy, as in Argentina and other countries, football is a factor in society. Football is a social event and it demands social responsibility on the part of football players both on and off the field as well as from the national and local managers.

As a boy I went to the stadium a number of times and I have fond memories of it. I went by myself and with my family. They were joyful moments on a Sunday spent together with my family. I would hope that football and all other popular sports can take back that element of celebration. Today football also operates within the world of business, marketing, television, etc. But the economic aspect must not prevail over that of the sport; it risks contaminating everything on the international, national, and even local level. Therefore, those at the top must react in a positive way, by restoring athletic dignity to these events. This is also your important responsibility as football players. You are the centre of attention, and many of your fans are young, very young people. Keep this in mind, remember that your actions resonate for better or for worse. May you always be true athletes!

Sport possesses a strong educational value in the growth of a person: personal growth with a balanced mind and spirit, and social growth in solidarity, loyalty and respect. May football continue to develop this potential! I wish you all the best in your work, and that tomorrow be a great celebration of sports! This is my wish for you. Thank you.

FRANCIS PP.

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