



DICASTERIUM  
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

30 December 2019

Prot. N. 2019/986

Dear friends' missionaries of Varsity Catholic,

I send you a very cordial greeting from the Vatican and I apologize for not being able to be there with you personally. It was really difficult to have had to give up this trip, but I hope to be able to be part of SLS soon!

As the person in charge of the Church and Sport Office of the Vatican, I would like to thank you for the evangelizing work you do through sports. I have been able to see your work during some visits to different American universities, and it is excellent!

In addition, I would like to take advantage of this Christmas season to give you two ideas to reflect on in view of your mission on the university campus in this new year that is about to begin.

1. The first idea is "cozy smile"

Christians should be, like the shepherds in Bethlehem, people who know how to see God in a baby, lying in a manger. In other words, the defects, the human miseries, both our own and those of the people we meet daily on campus, should not be an obstacle for us to welcome everyone with a smile. To everyone, regardless of their condition, their way of thinking, their political ideas, etc... the smile must be our *cover letter*, and the open arms our *business card*. I believe this is a very typical attitude of a real sportsman or sportswoman. As Pope Francis says "We need smiling Christians, not because they take things lightly, but because they are filled with the joy of God, because they believe in love and live to serve.

2. The second idea is "respectful audacity"

In sport, we are always looking for improvements that will lead us to better results. We too must find new instruments, new ways for people, for athletes to come into contact with Jesus Christ, so that they can see in our testimony that Christ takes nothing away and gives

everything. Without forgetting the words of Saint John Paul II who used to encourage people to “witness with your life that ideas are not imposed but proposed,” the Church is called to be a sign of Jesus Christ in the world, also through the sports practiced in universities, parishes, schools, and associations... Every occasion is good for announcing Christ’s message, “whether the time is favorable or unfavorable”. Sport gives us many occasions to engage other people in moments of true friendship and sincere conversation, where we can make known the joy that gives meaning to our lives. Let us not miss these occasions to bring our friends and university students closer to God.

To put this into practice, I would like to suggest you to read “Giving the best of yourself”, the first Vatican document on sports, that describes the Church’s role and relationship with sports, the potential dangers in the sports world, but also the many benefits that come from participating in athletics. I am sure you will find many ideas to put in place on your daily mission inside Varsity Catholic.

While I look forward to hear from you soon, I wish you a very fruitful New Year and I will pray these days specially for you and your mission at St. Peters tomb.

God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Pérez de Camino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Santiago Pérez de Camino  
Head of the Church and Sport Office