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Audience with the participants in the “Sette Colli” Swimming Trophy

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 54th “Sette Colli” Swimming Trophy competition (Rome 23-25 June 2017).

The following is the Pope’s address to those present:

Holy Father’s Address

Dear friends of the Italian Swimming Federation
and athletes competing for the “Sette Colli” Swimming Trophy in Rome.

I thank the president of the Federation for his words introducing our meeting.

These are days of joy and enthusiasm for you and for the sports fans who support you, because sport is also a celebration. A celebration not without content, as it transmits values that are increasingly necessary in a society like ours, which is defined as “fluid”, without firm points of reference. Your sport is performed in water, but it is not “fluid”; rather, it is very “solid” as it requires constant commitment and fortitude.

For this familiarity that you have with water, I like to remember the words of St. Francis of Assisi: “Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste”.

Your challenge to yourselves, competing, living in contact with water, can also be a contribution to a different culture of water: water is life, without water life does not exist. And talking about life means talking about God, origin and wellspring of life, and also our Christian life begins with the sign of water, with Baptism.

The water in which you swim, dive, play, and compete, requires several forms of attention: the value of the body, which must be cared for and not idolized; the need for interiority and the search for meaning in what you do; the

strength and courage to resist fatigue; the clear vision of which port to look for in life and how to reach it; and the value of authenticity, which means transparency, clarity, inner cleanliness.

In contact with water, you learn to be repelled by anything that is polluting, in sport and in life.

Dear managers and athletes, I thank you for your visit. I wish you every good to your activity, your families, and your plans. May the Lord bless you and always give you the joy of participating in sport together in a brotherly spirit.
