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PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180628g

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## **Audience with the Italian Swimming Federation**

At 11.15 this morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Italian Swimming Federation.

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

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear friends,

I give warmly welcome you, with special thanks to the president of the Federation for his words.

In these days of sporting contests – the “Seven Hills” Trophy – aside from technical results, you also offer testimony of discipline, healthy competition and team play. You show how far one can arrive through the effort of training, which involves great commitment and also sacrifices. All this constitutes a lesson of life, especially for your peers. Swimming, like any other sporting activity, if practised with loyalty, becomes an opportunity for the formation of human and social values, to strengthen along with the body also the character and will, to learn to know oneself and accept oneself, among companions.

I would like to insist a little on this aspect of “being a team”. Certainly, swimming is a predominantly individual sport, but in any case practising it in a sports club and even at national level becomes a team experience, in which collaboration and mutual help count a lot. And then there are relay races, and water polo, which is a classic team game. Above all, there is synchronized swimming, which truly exalts being a team: it is all about harmony, and excellence is reached when the athletes move so as to form a single movement. It is truly fascinating, and for us as common spectators seems almost impossible, but also here the secret, aside from individual competence, is mutual help.

Speaking of synchronized swimming, I cannot but think of Noemi, your companion who tragically passed away a few days ago, here in Rome. I have prayed for her and for her family, and today I remember her together with you.

Dear managers and athletes, be a good example to your peers, an example that can help them build their future. The language of sport is universal and easily reaches the new generations. Therefore, I encourage you to transmit positive messages through your activity, thus also contributing to improving the society in which we live.

May the Lord bless you and always give you the joy of practising sport together, in a fraternal spirit. Thank you.

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