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Audience with the leaders of the European Swimming League (LEN)

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience the leaders of the Ligue Européenne de Natation (European Swimming League), on the occasion of the upcoming European Championships in Rome (11 to 21 August 2022).

The following is the Pope's greeting during the meeting, and the message addressed to all the athletes who will participate in the Championships:

Greeting of the Holy Father and Message to the Athletes

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you, the leadership of LEN European Aquatics, and I thank your President for his kind words of greeting on your behalf.

You have come in preparation for the European Aquatics Championships, which will be held in Rome next month. I am happy that our city once more hosts this impressive sporting event. These days, we need sports more than ever – real sports! – as a counterbalance to the conflict and hostility weighing down on our world and, sadly, also our continent of Europe.

For this reason, I readily accepted your proposal to address a Message to all those athletes who will take part in the Championships. I will read it here in your presence and you can convey it to them at a suitable time.

I offer my best wishes to you and your families, and for your work. God bless you all. Now, I will read my Message.

Dear Athletes!

I send you my greetings from Rome, where, a month from now, you will take part in the European Aquatics Championships. This pleases me greatly, because every great sporting event is a special moment when young people from different countries can encounter and interact with one another, and that is a wonderful sign of hope for the future of our human family. It is also appropriate because Rome is historically a universal city, open to the world, the city from which the Church spreads everywhere the Gospel of fraternity.

I am sure that you, like myself, are saddened because the war in Ukraine casts its shadow on this celebration. At the same time, I would hope that this will make us all the more committed to showing our desire for a world of peace, a world without wars, without hatred between peoples, without nuclear threats.

Dear athletes, I pray that the European Championships here in Rome will be for all of you a serene and joyful experience of friendship and fraternity, and that each of you will be able to offer, in healthy competition, the very best of yourselves. With affection, I bless all of you and your loved ones. And I would ask you, please, to say a prayer for me. Thank you!
