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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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## **Audience with the International Ice Hockey Federation**

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the International Ice Hockey Federation.

The following is the Pope's address to the participants in the meeting:

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

Dear Friends,

I am happy to greet and welcome the participants of the International Ice Hockey Federation Semi-Annual Congress. I would like to thank the President of the Federation, Mr. René Fasel, for his kind words of greeting.

Sport is a very special channel for the promotion of peace and unity. Sporting activities are meeting places where people of many different backgrounds come together. Hockey is a good example of how sport can express a sense of community. It is a team game in which each team member has an important role to play. Whenever you take part in the World Championships, you can see how people from many different countries enjoy coming together to experience the beauty of sport.

It is also important to keep in mind that sport has a role to play in our growth and integral development. That is why the Church values sport in itself, as an arena of human activity where the virtues of temperance, humility, courage and patience can be fostered, and encounters with beauty, goodness, truth and joy can be witnessed (cf. *Giving the best of yourself*, 1 June 2018, 1.3).

As you are the leaders of international ice hockey, it is consoling to know that your goal is not only to control the guidelines and rules of the sport, but also to make it inclusive and available to individuals on a global level. Ice hockey requires unique skills and strength. Players have to master the techniques involved in skating and

maintaining their balance on ice, and they also have to keep up with the movement of the puck and be able to get up after a fall. Sports like these require hours of training. As you support the development of this sport worldwide, you are encouraging young and old, men and women, to bring out the best of themselves and to promote friendly relationships on and off the ice rink.

Additionally, I would also like to acknowledge the fact that your organization received approval for its updated statutes and bylaws in May this year, and that a new Ethics Board has been included. Today's culture may sometimes steer sporting activities down the wrong path, but we must keep in mind that rules are there to serve a specific purpose and to avoid a descent into chaos. Athletes honour fair play when they not only obey the formal rules but also observe justice with respect to their opponents so that all competitors can freely engage in the game (cf. *ibid.*, 3.2).

With all of this in mind, I encourage you and your Federation to go forth and continue your special mission to make this sport inclusive and to ensure a safe community for all who take part.

May the Lord bless you and always give you the joy of sport being played together. Thank you.

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