



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

Vatican, 4 March, 2019

Prot. N. 2019/185

Dear Dr. Power and Symposium Attendees,

I am pleased to learn that the *Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series* will be sponsoring, with the support of several co-sponsors including the University of Notre Dame, a *Symposium on Sports Education & Pastoral Care*, whose aim is to provide an academic focus on our Dicastery's recent document on the Christian perspective on sports, entitled "Giving the Best of Yourself".

The Church values the unique and important place of sports in people's lives. Sports involves not only the individual person in physical exercise, but also can foster a sense of community. Sports activities serve as an antidote to a culture of individualism, and bridge the gap between the generations. When a father plays with his son, when children play together in the park or at school, when an athlete celebrates the victory with his or her supporters, in all these contexts we see the way sports can bring about community and encounters between people.

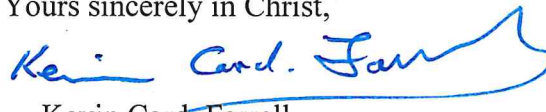
The notion of "pay to play" that is becoming increasingly common in youth sports today makes it difficult for all children to enjoy the human and spiritual benefits of sports. Excluding students from low income families, displaced children, or those who are physically and intellectually challenged from playing a sport is contrary the life and ministry of Jesus, who always showed special concern for children and particularly for the poor and the excluded.

Whether it is at parishes or high schools throughout the United States, it is important to take note of the value of youth having access to sports. I am delighted to know that one of the objectives of your Symposium is to explain and to help embrace at a practical level the Church's social teaching about sport as "a powerful instrument for the growth" of people from all creeds and cultures; as an activity that "rouses us to go beyond ourselves and our own self interests in a healthy way," and, when it is organized well, that "fosters loyalty in interpersonal relations, friendship, and respect for rules."

I pray to the Lord, and ask for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that your Symposium will help advance a genuine understanding of the value of sports for the well being and growth of the young people the Church is accompanying in the United States today.

With gratitude for your work and service to youth and to society at large, I take this opportunity to send my greetings and encouragement to all participants, and to impart my blessing for the success of all your endeavors.

Yours sincerely in Christ,


Kevin Card. Farrell
Prefect