



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Pilgrims on the Way of Hope: A Resource for the Jubilee of Sports

Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

United States Conference of
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Jubilee of Sports: Resource Packet

June 14-15, 2025

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

The Holy See has designated a number of Jubilee Days throughout 2025 to recognize and celebrate different groups of people and various evangelizing ministries in the Church. The Jubilee of Sports will be held June 14-15, 2025, in Rome; however, these resources can be used for engaging and celebrating athletes, managers, coaches, and sports fans at any time throughout the Jubilee Year.

This resource packet is for anyone who finds it useful. It can be used and/or adapted by dioceses, eparchies, parishes, schools, campuses, apostolates, movements, organizations, or individuals to plan their celebration of the Jubilee of Sports. It might also serve as a catalyst or inspiration for the creation and development of local or year-round resources for volunteers in the community or globally.

For Catholic athletes, managers, coaches, and their family and friends who are making a Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome or particular Jubilee celebration in a diocese or eparchy within the United States during 2025, this packet can also serve as an aid in the preparation or experience of that trip.



Additional resources for the Jubilee of Sports and other celebrations can be found online at the USCCB Jubilee Year web pages: available in English at <https://www.usccb.org/committees/jubilee-2025> and available in Spanish at <https://www.usccb.org/es/committees/jubileo-2025>.

SPORTS MINISTRY

Sports have been part of the Christian experience since the beginning of the Church, as athletes were among the first Christians. In 1945, Pope Pius XII (in *Sport at the Service of the Spirit*, July 29, 1945) noted:

Sport, properly directed, develops character, makes a man courageous, a generous loser, and a gracious victor; it refines the senses, gives intellectual penetration, and steels the will to endurance. It is not merely a physical development then. Sport, rightly understood, is an occupation of the whole



man, and while perfecting the body as an instrument of the mind, it also makes the mind itself a more refined instrument for the search and communication of truth and helps man to achieve that end to which all others must be subservient, the service and praise of his Creator.

Successive popes and Catholic leaders in recent history have also encouraged the integration of the Gospel in the world of sports. Various organizations such as Catholic Athletes for Christ were established to help give Catholic support to athletes, coaches, and sports ministers. At the *International Conference on the Pastoral Care and Catholic Evangelization of the Global Sports World* (May 16-18, 2024), Pope Francis said:

The Church recognizes her need to be pastorally present in the world of sport and wishes to promote an education in the genuine values of athletic competition, purified of forms of egotism and purely material concerns. It is likewise important that the Church reflect upon the value of sport in relation to her own mission of proclaiming the Gospel and encouraging all those engaged in the world of sport to propose Jesus as 'God's true athlete.' A number of statements by the Popes have enriched the Church's reflection on sport, setting it on its broader human context, warning against the dangers of dehumanization and corruption and encouraging athletic activity as a privileged place of encounter between people and fraternity among peoples.

The "Holy Games" Catholic evangelization initiative at the Paris Summer 2024 Olympics sponsored by the Archdiocese of Paris and the French Bishops' Conference was an important application of the Holy Father's emphasis that the global world of sports is a Catholic mission field. The United States, anticipating the Catholic evangelization that will occur at the 2028

Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, had strong participation in Paris. Fr. Joseph Fitzgerald, a handball Olympian from the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta and a pastor in the Diocese of Rockville Centre (Long Island, New York), worked with representatives of the "Holy Games" Paris initiative and the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) Varsity Catholic in celebrating Masses, hearing confessions, and evangelizing.

In 2024, USCCB launched a collection of digital resources for sports ministry and posted them on the Conference's website at www.usccb.org/sports. This page is continually updated by the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth with support materials for parish, campus, diocesan, or national efforts related to sports, in particular as they related to laity and young people.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

From the lowest level of youth sports to the highest level of professional sports, the Catholic Church needs to bring the Light of Jesus Christ directly into the global sports world. The Church needs to combine the global missiology of *Evangelium Gaudium* (2013) with the Catholic Social Justice themes of *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).

We need to articulate a bold evangelizing and global missiological vision for the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, the World Cup, the Tour de France, and the Super Bowl.

In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium* 261, the Holy Father states:

How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction. Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts.



And in his exhortation to and about young people, particularly in *Christus Vivit* 227, Pope Francis noted:

The Church should not underestimate the potential of sports for education and formation, but instead maintain a strong presence there... At the heart of the experience of sport is joy: the joy of exercising, of being together, of being alive and rejoicing in the gifts the Creator gives us each day.

With this in mind, may this new chapter include a new uniquely Catholic evangelizing missiology to the global sports world with our presence in this field.

As we know, professional sports are a major for-profit industry focused on financial gain often at the expense of human dignity. Athletes are often seen through the eyes of consumerism, huge salaries, celebrity status, manipulation, and a throw-away culture rather than being seen through the eyes of God and the dignity of the human person. The Church is called to advocate for professional sports as a reality that elevates humanity towards God rather than one that distorts reality and falsely makes athletes into gods.

The Catholic Church's evangelizing "pastoral care of sports" is a key dimension of Pope Francis' call to build "an architecture of peace" in the world. As we approach the June 13-15, 2025, Jubilee of Sports in Rome, we call down the Holy Spirit's creative and missionary tongues of flame on the global sports world.

Most Rev. John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre

A CATHOLIC ATHLETE'S GUIDE TO ENGAGING IN HOLINESS AND EVANGELIZATION

The following can be a list of guiding principles for any Catholic athlete, as well as manager, coach, or family member connected to the world of sports, who seeks to engage more deeply in a life of holiness and evangelization in his or her journey to and through the Jubilee Holy Year in 2025.

1. The Catholic athlete is part of the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church. The Catholic athlete opens themselves to the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in their souls in prayer and allows the Holy Trinity to guide them on their Catholic athletic ecclesial mission to bring a spirit of holiness and virtue to the local and global sports world.
2. Catholic athletes are grounded in the liberating truths of Catholic theology and spirituality and are committed to deepening their understanding and capacity to share their Catholic faith intellectually and spiritually.
3. All Catholics are called to be dedicated to the Catholic formation of our Catholic coaches and Catholic athletes and to developing a refined spirit of ecumenism and inter-faith charity that inspires the non-Catholic coaches and athletes we work and pray with.
4. Catholic athletes are focused on giving Glory to God and living the Paschal Mystery – the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Catholic athletes, focusing on Christ, die to themselves in the athletic



sacrifices and training they pursue and rise in Christ-centered, generous, charitable and virtuous athletic performance and solidarity. Catholic athletes live Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

5. Catholic athletes focus on a Catholic Church spirit of communion and mission among the athletes, their coaches, the fans and those they compete against. This is a critical dimension of a Catholic formation for their future vocational and career paths.
6. Catholic athletes focus on a Catholic theology and spirituality of work and the Catholic belief that when we offer God our work or our athletic training, they become a means of our sanctification. Catholic athletes have St. Joseph the Worker as a critical patron intercessor. Catholic athletes love all the saints and appreciate those saints who evangelized through sports.
7. Catholic athletes focus on the Sacraments and fidelity to the Sunday Mass. Catholic athletes are called to live the rhythm of the Catholic Mass in the rhythm of their academic and athletic lives and the belief that the academic life can nourish the athletic life, and the athletic life can nourish the academic life if Christ is at the center. Catholic athletes understand that the Eucharist and the Catholic Mass "are a fountain of charity."
8. Catholic athletes live Jesus and the mission of mercy of the Catholic Church through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, the mentoring of younger athletes in the area, and their living and witnessing to the Gospel of Life and Catholic social teaching.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PILGRIM PREPARATION

A major element of the Jubilee celebration for Catholics is making pilgrimage. For some, that may involve going to Rome, where international pilgrims traditionally visit the Holy Doors of the four great basilicas (Saint Peter, Saint Paul Outside the Walls, Saint Mary Major, and Saint John Lateran). For most others, though, local Jubilee pilgrimages can be made to diocesan or eparchial cathedrals, churches, or other religious sites.

Here are some practical suggestions whether you celebrate the Jubilee of Sports in Rome or at home:

- Review the Holy Fathers' Addresses on Catholic evangelization and global sports and resources on the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education website: <https://www.dce.va/it/cultura/sport.html>.
- Review the USCCB web page on Catholic Sports Ministry, which includes many resources and the statements of individual U.S. Bishops: <https://www.usccb.org/sports>.
- Find creative ways to evangelize your local sports world whether it is CYO Sports or town- or regionally-sponsored sports. See if you can be an instrument in the family friendships that develop of helping to invite families to come to Mass. Address the fundamentals of good sportsmanship through the lens of Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and solid age-appropriate catechesis and application.
- Have a strong Catholic spirituality that drives personal efforts to stay in shape and live a balanced and integrated life.



- Here is an adaptable vision statement for a Catholic sports ministry, guiding athletes towards evangelization and pastoral care. Consider applying it in your local community:

"The pursuit of holiness and virtue are at the heart of a Catholic athlete's approach to athletics. Catholic moral teaching grounded in the Ten Commandments is the moral compass for every Catholic athlete leading them to happiness rather than the self-destructive paths of performance enhancing drug use, cheating and self-glorification. The Holy Fathers of the Catholic Church always remind us that the world of global sports is "a global Catholic mission field." We believe that our Catholic coaches and our Catholic athletes are a powerful light of Jesus Christ and the mission of mercy of the Catholic Church in the local and global sports world."

If headed to Rome for the Jubilee of Sports:

Should you, by yourself or with other athletes, managers, coaches, or fans, decide to travel to Rome, in particular for the Jubilee of Sports (June 14-15, 2025), the following may be helpful:

- You can develop a trip on your own or go through a licensed tour operator that specializes or has experience in religious travel. The latter option may cost extra, but it can save a local organizer time; additionally, those operators may have existing connections with vendors and may be able to advise on travel concerns. PLEASE NOTE: The USCCB does not endorse nor identify any licensed tour operator as the official U.S. tour operator.
- The official Jubilee events for sports include passage through Holy Doors, a Sports Village under the theme of "Sport Generates Hope," and Mass with the Holy Father on Sunday, June 15, in Saint Peter's Square. Pilgrims and groups may also consider taking part in

additional activities, either planned on their own or events hosted by other apostolates/ groups.

- Prepare for the trip with liturgies, retreats, devotional and service experiences, community building, catechesis, and fundraising, as needed. Take time for prayer, especially with the Blessed Sacrament, as well as practical travel planning (packing, supplies, water, etc.).
- Upon the return home, consider in advance ways to share the experience with others and put into practice the missionary lessons received during the Jubilee moments in Rome.

If coordinating a local pilgrimage within the United States:

It is highly recommended to make pilgrimage to one's own diocesan or eparchial cathedral or other church(es) or religious site(s) designated by the bishop or eparch.

- Plan for a local pilgrimage which can take place at any time of year or can be done at the same time as the events for athletes, managers, coaches, and fans in Rome (June 14-15, 2025). The timing, as well as the exact local destination, is at the discretion of the local organizer(s).
- Research the pilgrimage destination to ensure that your visit does not coincide with liturgical or local community events or is being done within the posted opening hours for the site. You may wish to contact someone in leadership at the location in advance, especially if you plan to bring a group.
- Before embarking on a local pilgrimage, consider taking time for prayer and community-building.
- After returning home (even if the trip was local), take time for prayer and theological reflection on the graces of God received



during the pilgrimage experience. If you went as a group, continue to gather in the weeks and months following the trip to support one another and coordinate missionary actions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING ATHLETES LOCALLY

Suggestions for Parishes

- Use the weekend liturgies on June 14-15 to recognize all athletes, managers, and coaches in the parish community: in the homily, general intercessions, with a special blessing, or by inviting them to serve in key liturgical roles. An example of a petition for the Prayer of the Faithful might include:

For the women and men of our parish who are engaged in sports: athletes, managers, coaches, and families, that through their dedication to good works on the field, they may be signs of hope within the community and society, we pray to the Lord.

- Have a reception or networking activity after all weekend Masses on June 14-15 for athletes, managers, coaches, and families engaged in sports. During those gatherings, offer food and drink, opportunities to meet-and-mingle, and invitations to develop a stronger sports ministry in the parish.
- Plan a local pilgrimage for athletes, managers, and coaches to the diocesan/eparchial cathedral or to another religious site or church in your area, using the ideas laid out in the previous section.

- Livestream or replay video of key Jubilee events (i.e., Mass with the Holy Father) taking place in Rome from June 14-15 at the parish (noting the time difference between Rome and your local area). You may also consider coordinating programs at the parish during the livestream viewings such as liturgies, Eucharistic adoration, confessions, catechesis, service projects, small groups, or socials.

Suggestions for Dioceses and Eparchies

- Celebrate a liturgy or host a prayer service for Catholic athletes, managers, coaches, and families from parishes in or beyond the local area. Host it at the diocesan/eparchial cathedral during or around June 14-15, concurrent with or proximate to the Jubilee celebrations happening in Rome.
- Hold a diocesan/eparchial-wide Jubilee walking pilgrimage for all athletes, managers, coaches, and families from the cathedral (or another site of your choosing) to religious sites, churches, and/or to a Catholic-led social services center or institution. Consider also inviting the bishop or eparch.
- Post stories about Catholic athletes, managers, coaches, and families in parish or community life on the diocesan or eparchial website, social media channels, and communications (magazine, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) prior to and/or during the Jubilee of Sports in June 2025.
- Host a special diocesan/eparchial-wide dinner or reception for athletes, managers, coaches, and families at some point during the Jubilee Year. Consider an award or recognition program for those who make key contributions to the life of the diocese/eparchy and/or society at large.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & DOCUMENTS

- [**Evangelii Gaudium**](#), Pope Francis (2013): an apostolic exhortation on evangelization and missionary discipleship, which is the call of all athletes, managers, coaches, and families engaged in sports ministries. Available in print and in e-book from several Catholic publishers and online.
- [**Living as Missionary Disciples**](#), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis (2017): the U.S. Bishops' response to Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* and a basic resource guide outlining the principles of evangelization: encounter, accompaniment, community, and sending. Available online, with additional resources from the Catholic Apostolate Center.
- [**Christus Vivit**](#), Pope Francis (2019): an apostolic exhortation to and about youth and young adults. Recognizing that many active Catholic athletes are in their teens, twenties, or thirties, this letter from the Holy Father provides an excellent foundation for living the Christian life, in sports or in any other context.
- [**Listen, Teach, Send**](#), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2024): the U.S. Bishops' response to Pope Francis' *Christus Vivit* and further wisdom for youth and young adults across the United States, inclusive of Catholic athletes and sports-engaged leaders in their teens, twenties, or thirties.
- [**USCCB Sports Ministry Page**](#), with resources for Catholic athletes, managers, coaches, and families engaged in sports.
- [**Vatican General Guidelines for the Pastoral of Sport**](#), Dicastery for Culture and Education (2024): a brief overview of the Catholic Church's approach to sports ministry, available on the USCCB website.

- [**Catholic Athletes for Christ \(CAC\)**](#): a national Catholic organization providing an integrated network of sports-oriented clergy and lay people who serve Catholic athletes, coaches, and staff in the practice of their faith and promote evangelization through sports ministries.

KEY SAINTS

Holy Companions for Athletes, Coaches, and Fans

- **St. Joseph the Worker (first century, feast days March 19 and May 1)**, foster father of Jesus and spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary; he completely dedicated himself to service to the Holy Family through his strength and resilience, serving as the Lord's father figure in Jesus' youth as he grew in body and mind.
- **St. Sebastian (third century, feast day January 20)**, strong young captain of the Praetorian Guard during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, yet secretly provided aid to persecuted Christians. "Martyred twice," once by being shot with arrows (yet survived and nursed back to health), then beaten to death by cudgels.
- **St. Lidwina (1380-1433, feast day April 14)**, Dutch mystic and patroness of ice skating; after falling from ice skating at age 15, she became progressively disabled (possibly from multiple sclerosis), yet also became a great healer and charitable provider for those in need for the remainder of her life.
- **St. Rita of Cascia (1381-1457, feast day May 22)**, Italian widow and Augustinian nun, patroness of impossible causes and the "unofficial patron" of baseball; in the octave after her feast day in 1923, after intercessory prayers were offered by poor oil workers in Texas, oil sprung forth unexpectedly and covered drillers who were playing baseball to pass the time.



- **St. Luigi Scrosoppi (1804-1884, feast day April 3)**, Italian priest and founder of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Cajetan of Thiene, and the patron saint of soccer due to his active ministry with children and youth.
- **Bl. Michael McGivney (1852-1890, feast day August 13)**, founder of Knights of Columbus (1882), baseball player, and filled with a “zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel and generous concern for his brothers and sisters” that “made him an outstanding witness of Christian solidarity and fraternal assistance.”
- **St. Teresa of the Andes (1900-1920, feast day April 12)**, Chilean religious sister of the Discalced Carmelites, who was a swimmer, tennis, croquet, and equestrian in her childhood; upon entering religious life, her approach to life changed and dedicated herself to the service of God.
- **Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925, feast day July 4)**, lay leader, athlete, mountain climber, skier, equestrian, student, member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, beloved among the poor and marginalized, and declared the “Man of the Beatitudes”; engaged in regular acts of Christian charity, especially for the sick and dying people of Turin, Italy. Died of polio at young adult age of 25 while ministering to polio victims.
- **St. John Paul II (1920-2005, feast day October 22)**, skier, kayaker, hiker, fisherman, and outdoorsman, spoke frequently on the power of sports to help in the development of young people’s faith.
- **Bl. Chiara Badano (1971-1990, feast day October 29)**, Italian teenager, member of the Focolare movement, tennis player, skier, swimmer, and visionary; after feeling pain while playing tennis, she discovered she had a rare form of bone cancer – but declared her dedication to Jesus. As she died, she said, “Oh, Mama, young people...young people...they

are the future. You see, I can't run anymore, but how I would like to pass on to them the torch, like in the Olympics! Young people have only one life and it's worthwhile to spend it well.”

PRAYERS

St. Paul's Reflections, using Sports Images

To the Corinthian Church:

*To the weak I became weak,
to win over the weak.*

*I have become all things to all,
to save at least some.*

*All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.*

*Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all
run in the race, but only one wins the prize?
Run so as to win.*

*Every athlete exercises discipline in every way.
They do it to win a perishable crown,
but we an imperishable one.
Thus I do not run aimlessly;
I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing.
No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that,
after having preached to others,
I myself should be disqualified.*

(1 Corinthians 9:22-27)

In a Second Letter to Timothy:

*For I am already being poured out like a libation,
and the time of my departure is at hand.*

*I have competed well;
I have finished the race;
I have kept the faith.*

*From now on the crown of righteousness
awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge,
will award to me on that day,
and not only to me, but to all
who have longed for his appearance.*

(2 Timothy 4:6-8)



St. John Paul II's Jubilee Prayer for Sports

*O Christ, we fix our gaze on you,
who offer every person the fullness of life.
Lord, you heal and strengthen those who,
trusting in you, accept your will.*

*Today... athletes throughout the world
are gathered here in spirit,
above all to renew their faith in you,
man's only Savior.*

*And those, like the athlete,
who are at the peak of their strength
recognize that without you, O Christ,
they are inwardly like the blind man,
incapable, that is, of seeing the full truth,
of understanding the deep meaning of life,
especially when faced with the darkness
of evil and death.*

*Even the greatest champion finds himself
defenseless before the fundamental questions
of life and needs your light to overcome
the demanding challenges
that a human being is called to face.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, help these athletes to be your
friends and witnesses to your love.
Help them to put the same effort into personal
asceticism that they do into sports;
help them to achieve a harmonious
and cohesive unity of body and soul.*

*May they be sound models to imitate for all who
admire them. Help them always to be athletes
of the spirit, to win your inestimable prize:
an imperishable crown that lasts forever. Amen!*

(St. John Paul II, Jubilee of Sports, 2000)

