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Pope Francis has said that all those participating and watching the Olympics should aim not for medals but for “solidarity” and “the recognition that we are all members of one human family”.

Speaking in Portuguese at his weekly general audience this morning, Pope Francis expressed a wish “that the spirit of the Olympics would inspire all – participants and spectators – to ‘fight the good fight’ and end the race together, desiring as a prize not a medal, but something much more precious: the creation of a civilisation where there reigns solidarity founded on the recognition that we are all members of one human family, no matter the differences of culture, skin colour or religion.”

He also offered special prayers for and greetings to the people of Rio – where the Olympics will be held – and to athletes and fans who will gather there for the Games, which begin this Friday.

Pope Francis’ prayer intention for August is: “That sports may be an opportunity for friendly encounters between peoples, and may contribute to peace in the world.”

The Apostleship of Prayer, a Jesuit organisation promoting prayers for the Pope’s intentions, releases a monthly video to accompany Pope Francis’ intentions. August’s video, posted yesterday, features five young athletes of various races kicking, hitting and throwing balls to break down a wall representing social division.

