



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty of Theology

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Sports Ministry in Malta:
Vision and Strategy

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Licentiate in Sacred
Theology

December 2019

Faculty of Theology
University of Malta



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Abstract

Sport and religion are two important realities which help human beings to express themselves and grow in excellence. Both present a personal and social journey in the quest for growth. What needs to be continuously rediscovered is the interaction these two realities have when it comes to spirituality and living one's faith. This work aims at studying the interaction which has taken place throughout history, but which at times is forgotten or left aside by today's society, towards a better understanding of how religion, more specifically the Catholic Church in Malta, could make the most of this interaction through the development of a sports ministry vision and strategy.

This interaction is studied through a historical analysis of sport and religion as well as through the analysis of the different Christian sports ministries that have developed around the world. Through the analysis of historical data, this study looks at how sport and religion have developed and grown together, many times having sports activities which incorporate or are directly related to religious rituals or meanings. The relationship between religion and sport has shifted forwards and backwards along the years, up to the point where sport started to be seen as an important tool, and in fact as a proper way to experience God in one's life. This is also seen through various theological reflections.

The journey led to the development of Christian sports ministries, with various models being presented and analysed here, leading us to the second part of this study. Through an analysis of the current reality in Malta, as well as qualitative interviews and a focus group, it was concluded that a sports ministry strategy for Malta should focus on creating a network of sports people, communicating what sports ministry is and training sports ministers professionally.

*Affectionately dedicated
to my parents
and family,
my coaches,
and all who helped me
fall in love with sport.*

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Acknowledgements

The journey experienced in this work started much before the first word in this study was written. Many people have helped me to come to love sport and witness the difference it has made in my life. Many people have also inspired me to see sport as a way of living my faith and the mission I have been given as a priest. I do, then, have to thank my family, friends, coaches, sports mates, priests, in particular Fr. Hilary Tagliaferro OSA, and all who have supported me and been of inspiration to help me live and grow in this mission.

I want to thank Bishop Joseph Galea-Curmi for his support, help and insight towards the formulation of this work. I also want to thank Fr. Jimmy Bonnici for his assistance and insights, and all who have contributed towards this study.

I thank also the past and present members of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport and Mr. David Guehring who gave me the opportunity to experience sport in this way and with whom I am living this mission.

I also want to thank Fr. Mario Mangion and the Parish of Saint George in Hal Qormi for their patience and support during the time I was working on this study.

Last but not least, I thank God for the opportunity to live out the talents and characteristics he has given me through sport, which help me and others to experience Him in our lives.

Abbreviations

AIA	Athletes in Action
CAC	Catholic Athletes for Christ
CONI	Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano
CSI	Centro Sportivo Italiano
CSRM	Church Sports and Recreation Ministries
CST	Community Sports Teams
ECSU	European Christian Sports Union
FARI	Federazione Attività Recreative Italiane
FASCI	Federazione delle associazioni sportive cattoliche italiane
FCA	Fellowship for Christian Athletes
FICEP	Fédération Internationale Catholique d'Education Physique et sportive
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FISEC	Fédération Internationale Sportive de l'Enseignement Catholique
IOC	International Olympic Committee
JP2F4S	John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport
KDS	Kummissjoni Djoċesana Sport
MFA	Malta Football Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PFI	Pastoral Formation Institute
SPYS	Salesian Pastoral Youth Service.
SRS	Sportler ruft Sportler
UN	United Nations
WSM	World Sports Ministries
ŻAK	Żgħażaġħ Azzjoni Kattolika

Introduction

Background and context of study

“Sport has everything to do with our deepest identity ... with our true nature ... with who we really are ... our created *being*.”¹ This statement enlightens all that will be presented in this dissertation. Sport has been a popular and powerful reality in the world; a reality that demonstrates human ability and expression. Sport, when expressed in the right way, manages to get the best out of people. The same can be said about religion; when expressed in the right way, it allows humans to be who they truly are and enables them to connect with their spiritual being.

The latest ‘Church and Sport’ document, entitled ‘Giving the Best of Yourself’, states that:

Giving one’s very best is a fundamental theme in sports, as athletes both individually and collectively strive to achieve their goals in the game. When a person gives his very best, he experiences satisfaction and the joy of accomplishment. The same is true in human life in general and in living out the Christian faith.²

This document goes on to say that:

the Church as the people of God has a rich and profound experience of humanity. With great humility, it wants to share and put this experience at the service of sports. The Church approaches the world of sports because it desires to contribute to the construction of an increasingly authentic, humane sport.³

This study was being proposed and conducted during the same time this document was being presented within the Catholic Church and to the world, as the way the Church should move forward within the world of sports. It is the intention of this work to study different sports ministries so that a sports ministry could be developed within the Catholic Church in Malta; thus addressing what the Catholic Church is proposing. Pope Francis expressed the importance of such a ministry during his message for the 2019

¹ Lincoln Harvey, *A Brief Theology of Sport* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), xi.

² Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, “Giving the Best of Yourself: A document about the Christian perspective on sport and the human person” *vatican.va*, June 1, 2018, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/06/01/180601b.html>.

³ Ibid.

Missionary Month: “Sport as the practical way of a Church going out and meeting people in the midst of their abilities, talents, interests and passions, a Church that touches the lives of individuals through what they like.”⁴ Sports ministry is all about serving others through sport.

An interesting quote by J.R.R. Tolkien spoken to his friend C.S. Lewis, words which were ultimately instrumental in Lewis’ conversion to Christianity, goes like this:

We make things by the law in which we are made, we create because we are created; creativity, imagination, is God’s imageness in us. We tell stories because God is a storyteller, in fact he is *the* story teller. We tell our stories with words, he tells his story with history. The facts of history are his words, and providence is his story line. We are all part of his story.⁵

Though these words were not spoken in relation to sport, they present an activity which leads humans to God, and so it is in this same context that sport is seen in this work. Sport as a reflection of what God created in us; sport as an expression in history which represents how humans responded to God in history; sport that tells the story of humanity. Now is the time to make the most of this reality for the holistic benefit of human beings.

Motivation of the study

In 2014, when I was in my third year as a seminarian, I received an invitation to attend a seminar entitled ‘Evangelization through Sport’. Being a former athlete and one who loves sport, this seminar grabbed my attention and I immediately registered to attend. Amalgamating sport and evangelisation was always something that I thought about and dreamed of, since I experienced all the positive aspects sport brought to my life and the happiness and satisfaction it brings while I play it, while I also experienced the beautiful

⁴ Pope Francis, *Message of His Holiness Francis for World Mission Day 2019: Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World*, June 9, 2019.

⁵ EWTN, *Tolkien’s ‘The Lord of the Rings:’ A Catholic Worldview*, uploaded by Kevin O’Brien, entitled ‘Lewis and Tolkien Debate Myths and Lies’, online video, 8:45, June 3, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzBT39gx-TE&fbclid=IwAR1WAFQq1CXyEhOFFC2uPKjpMwUJmWUiYbF4dog4cGoa9Owc1_FqqKXmfgo.

message of Christ in my life and the happiness and fulfilment *that* brought to me. The possibility of evangelising through sport felt right.

This seminar was organised by the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport together with some members of the European Christian Sports Union. Later on I became part of this Commission; experiencing my dream, participating in various events, learning from different experiences in Malta and abroad while also attending sports ministry training courses.

The work within the Commission, as well as outside of it, has helped me encounter many opportunities in which evangelisation through sport can take place. From this I saw the potential sports ministry has to further develop in Malta, in all its facets. For this reason I decided to embark on this study and explore how sports ministry can help people, especially sports people, to meet Christ in their lives and learn how to live their relationship with God through sport.

Aim of the study

The next step in the journey is to realize that, as sportspeople, God has a specific mission for our lives: to help other sportspeople in the community hear the good news of Jesus and join the local church.⁶

The aim of this study is to make the next step in sports ministry in Malta. By looking at how religion and sport have affected each other in history, seeing how the Catholic Church and different church denominations came to understand the role of sport and apply it to their work by developing sports ministry, and looking at real experiences and examples from Malta and abroad, this work will move towards defining a vision and strategy which would help focus and facilitate the work of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport. Through a qualitative analysis, looking at the role sport plays in one's life, the role that the Church can and should play, while also what a sport

⁶ Bryan Mason, *Beyond the Gold: What every church needs to know about sports ministry* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media Ltd, 2011), 152.

ministry strategy within the Church should focus on, this study will attempt to define a vision and strategy based on real life experiences and on what is needed in Malta today.

Organisation of the dissertation

The first chapter will look at how religion and sport have been intertwined together since the beginning of history, showing examples of this through literature. From different religions, the chapter will then focus on sport and play as seen by the early Church; more precisely through the writings in Scripture and theologians. The Church's view and relationship with sport will continue to be studied through the medieval and modern periods, again analysing theologians', such as St. Thomas Aquinas, writings. This chapter will also present the differences between Catholic and Protestant views of sport and how different sport ministries developed in both traditions.

The second chapter will then present and analyse various examples of sport ministry visions, missions and strategies. This will lead us to also analyse the changes taking place within the Catholic Church through Pope John Paul II's introduction of the 'Church and Sport' section within the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. The situation of the Church and sport in Malta will also be studied in this chapter, so that in the third chapter the qualitative study will be presented. Chapter 3 will exhibit the methodology, results and analyses of the findings, ending with the presentation of the defined vision, mission and strategy.

Chapter 1: Sport and Religion

Introduction

This first chapter will focus on how sport has developed in a religious context throughout history; starting from ancient religions and then in Christianity, up to the introduction of the first sports ministries in the twentieth century.

1.1 Sport and Religion through the ages

1.1.1 - Sport and Ancient Religions

Sport has been woven into religion since ancient times, with sporting tournaments being held in temples and rules determined by cultic myths coming from the supernatural ordering of the universe. For example, in China, *Cuju* is linked to the Chinese Zodiac. This game, recognised by Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) as the distant ancestor of football¹ dates back to the sixth century B.C and uses the pitch to represent the earth, the ball a heavenly body, and the players as the Zodiac signs.² Such examples of religion and rituals being connected to sport are found all across the world, with the Nuba tribe in Sudan beginning their tournaments with dramatic rituals and covering themselves with white ash and clothes that symbolised the cattle they depended on.

Think of the Haka war dance, traditionally a Maori war dance now adopted so famously by the New Zealand Rugby team. This kind of war dance-ritual, displaying “pride, strength and unity”³ and using poetic words to describe ancestors and events in the tribe’s history, shows that sport expresses more than simply a game. When the first European settlers arrived in the Americas they found that sport was already quite

¹ “History of Football: The Origins,” FIFA.com, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/who-we-are/the-game/index.html>.

² Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 7 (see Intro., n.1).

³ “Haka-Maori war dance,” 100% Pure New Zealand, accessed February 6, 2019, <https://www.newzealand.com/us/feature/haka/>.

popular, with games, such as Stickball (similar to Lacrosse) in which two rival tribes' teams struck a ball (usually a rock or round object) towards a goal; mimicking a war more than just simply a game.⁴ This list of documented sports across the world can continue forever. One thing is clear – sport is universal!

Having said that, so is religion. We find examples of religious practices across different cultures; from India and China, Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Americas, Greece, Rome and so on. Religion, being an organised system of beliefs leading to a transcendent spiritual experience⁵, is very much infused in human life. It reflects an understanding of the divine which affects one's outlook on the world and daily life; helping to make sense of the world and give meaning to it. Ceremonial rituals aid to express these beliefs and respond to the particular god one believes in; many times to please god or remain in his favour.⁶ The term 'football gods' is used frequently by TV pundits, referring to these 'gods' who are overlooking the football game, and at times, insinuating, that they side with a team or another. We can expand this term to 'sport gods', and what we can take from this is that in humans there is this universal belief that there is always someone or something looking over what humans are doing.

This relationship between sport and religion is better witnessed in certain ancient games. The Jicarilla Apaches tribe, in what is now Texas, organise the annual *Go-jii-ya* race through which a balance in the food provision is found. The story goes that the sun and moon had left it in the hands of this tribe to find a way to balance the amount of crops that grow, and so it is critical for their survival that this race takes place each year. Similarly in Central America, *Tlatchtli* was a ball game played for thousands of years to honour a primordial contest between humans and gods which resulted in the creation of the sun and moon, symbolising the preservation of life; a game which guaranteed the fertility of the environment.⁷

Homer wrote about games held for Patroclus' sake, Achilles' friend killed at war, as a guarantee of his honour towards the gods; thus seen as a sort of funeral games.⁸ Here

⁴ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 6.

⁵ Joshua J. Mark, "Religion in the Ancient World," *Ancient History Encyclopaedia*, March 23, 2018, <https://www.ancient.eu/religion/>.

⁶ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

again we see how sport was used as a way of presenting the story of the world and a ritualistic way to gain favours from the gods. Still, this does not mean that sport is in itself religious.⁹

Sport started to be more directly associated with religion through the Olympics, which starting around the eighth century BC.¹⁰ These games, held in Olympia over a period of around six days, had more religious rituals than sport events. It is not known why Olympia was the chosen location for these games, though having an ancient altar dedicated to Zeus made it the perfect place to offer sacrifices to him and 'check' on one's relationship with the gods. Sport events, consisting of foot races, wrestling, boxing and chariot races, were limited to just one day, with the rest of the days dedicated to sacrificial rituals to the gods, particularly to Zeus, as well as a feast for the gods. The winners of the contests would make a procession towards Zeus' temple, where they would receive a laurel crown. Zeus would be presented with bone, fat and offal; both as a gift to Zeus and a recognition of his blessings.

Similarly, the Romans celebrated many festivals along their calendar year in honour of their many gods. Such festivals were marked with large public spectacles known as *ludi*, which mainly included sports and dramatic performances.¹¹ These festivals included rituals in honour of the particular gods as well as celebrations for particular military victories, since rulers came to be considered as gods. Divine favour was, similarly to what we have seen before, brought about by these sport events. Fishing contests or horse races would lead to a sacrificial rite in honour of the gods. Altars and statues were found in racing arenas. Sport and religion were again interrelated. Apart from this aspect, the Romans held in high regard the concept of *virtus*; this manliness attribute characterising "courage, prudence, justice, and self-control".¹² This was usually displayed through military excellence, but public spectacles made the perfect setting for its display in front of thousands of people, thus the *ludi* were used to portray the honour, dignity, reputation and fame of the Roman nobility.

⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13-14.

¹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹² Ibid., 18.

Such need for this public display led to the development of gladiatorial fights, referred to as *munera* (meaning 'favour' or 'gift'), originating from a sort of human sacrifice to the gods to calm their anger.¹³ Though these might seem extremely violent to many, to the Romans they were sacred events. The first part of the *munera* reflected what happens to someone who goes beyond the norms of Roman civilisation. This was portrayed in a sort of mythological drama. The culprit was thrown in to face wild beasts; a sort of representation of life showing what one faces when he goes against the norms of life, that is, faces what nature without laws has to offer. The second part of this one day event consisted in the gladiatorial fights which offered men the possibility of dying a virtuous and honourable (*virtus*) death.

The religious influence is again highlighted with 'representatives' of the gods leading the bodies out of the arena. Still, these events were more about Rome than the gods. They displayed Roman power: power over the captured beasts, power over chaos, power over death, and the Emperor who chose between life and death. This self-worship of all that is Roman did not go down well with the early Church.

Going back to Greece, interestingly Socrates, Plato and Aristotle used to contemplate and teach philosophy in gymnasias; places founded for physical training towards excellence. These philosophers, who wanted to do away with the mythological ideas of those before them, held physical fitness in high regard and found a place to contemplate "beauty, truth and goodness ... amid the physical posturing of the sporting body."¹⁴ Plato saw play as being related to the sacred, stating that anything that is related to the sacred must be taken seriously.¹⁵ Religion and sport are again woven together.

¹³ Ibid., 19

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic perspectives on sports: From Medieval to modern times*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 40.

1.1.2 - Sport and Christianity through time

This brings us to Christianity and the role of sports among Christians. The early Christians seemed to be set apart from the rest of society, and their life was based on the teachings of the Gospel. In view of what has been said and the interweaving of sports and pagan religions, the question naturally arises – could sport be part of a life oriented to Christ?

To answer this question, one must consider what sport implies, so that then one could reach a conclusion if such a participation is indeed good or not. Records from the sixteenth century show that the word ‘sport’ means a ‘game involving physical exercise’.¹⁶ Genesis gives a positive outlook on the embodied life which God has created “very good” (Gen 1:31), more so with humans being created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Thus the physical aspect in humanity, and so in sport, is good.

The theological implications in sport are very much embedded in the creation narratives. For this reason in the context of this historical outlook we shall see what theologians have presented in this regard. Lincoln Harvey presents the similarities between God as Creator and human beings who play.¹⁷ He states that God has created freely, thus with nothing commanding Him to create; He has created unnecessarily, because he did not need to create; but His creation is meaningful because, as Harvey points out, God gave meaning to us being created “from nothingness towards love in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Similarly, when humans play, they are playing freely, because they choose to; unnecessarily, because they do not really have to; but meaningfully, because they give a higher meaning to their play. In playing, humans are living out their “deepest identities as unnecessary but meaningful creatures.”¹⁹ Ivan Golub goes a step further in saying that God Himself is a player (*Deus ludens*), since human beings play (*homo ludens*) and they

¹⁶ “Sport,” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/sport>.

¹⁷ Rev. Dr Lincoln Harvey is Assistant Dean at St Mellitus College, as well as being Lecturer in Systematic Theology. Harvey was also Tutor for Christian Doctrine at The South East Institute for Theological Education, and had also taught on the MA and AKC programmes at King's College London for a number of years. Alongside his work in theological education, Lincoln has served as a novice in the Society of St Francis, Assistant Curate at St John-at-Hackney, and Associate Priest at St Andrew's Fulham Fields. He is currently a Licensed Preacher Under Seal in the Diocese of London, and is based at St Cuthbert's, Earl's Court. (<https://www.stmellitus.ac.uk/profile-list/revd-dr-lincoln-harvey>).

¹⁸ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 83.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

were created in the image and likeness of God.²⁰ Golub also says that God's likeness is seen in certain characteristics in sport, such as happiness, which comes from good and can come through one's participation in play.

These views on play take us up another step and bring us to question whether games and exercises are good. In both books of the Maccabees (1 Mac 1:14, 2 Mac 4:9) we find references to the building of gymnasiums in Jerusalem. These are not referred to in a positive way since they were built so that the people could follow Greek customs; thus putting games in a negative light. In the New Testament, Paul uses various sporting images showing how a disciple should act like an athlete who runs to win (1 Cor 9:24) or, even better than that, in order to gain "an imperishable wreath" (1 Cor 9:25). Such reference to an imperishable wreath is also found in Peter's first letter (1 Pet 5:4). Paul's use of sport examples does not show us his actual view on sport, that is, if he sees sport as being positive or negative, but simply as something one can learn from. What we know is that Paul speaks against the denigration of the body because our body "is a temple" which must be used to "glorify God" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

So one can say that the vision of Scripture is that the body is good and should be used to glorify God and that one can apply the lessons learnt from physical exercise to life. On the other hand, the games involving such exercises might not be in line with the Christian lifestyle.

Though God's incarnation put the body in a positive light and necessary for our salvation, as seen through Irenaeus and Tertullian, the early Church had a negative view of that which is material; emphasising the importance of spirit over the body. Church Fathers such as Basil the Great, Ambrose of Milan argued that the body only plagued the Christian life. Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom both speak of the risk of sin the flesh brings, but still state that the body was created good.²¹

²⁰ Ivan Golub, "El Ultimo Dia de la Creacion: o el don del sexto dia," *Coleccion Verdad e Imagen* Volume 17 (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 2004): 97.

Fr Ivan Golub (1930-2018) was ordained in 1957. He was a leading Croatian theologian as well as a poet and historian who studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Pope St. John Paul II appointed him to a five-year term on the International Theological Commission in 1992 and is author to more than 250 works.

(<https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=39614>).

²¹ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 27.

These views can be seen as contradictory, but what is for sure is that the Church never believed in a dualistic reality, contrary to the Gnostic, Manichaean, and later on Iconoclastic views.²² Patrick Kelly SJ states that while these held that the body is bad, Christianity, through the creation of human beings and indeed through God's incarnation, always saw the material world as good since it was indeed created by God.²³ Quoting Irenaeus, Kelly stated that Christians "hope for the ... salvation of the whole person, that is, of soul and body."²⁴ Kelly said that through the images in art, Christianity showed that there is nothing wrong in what is material and that this must be used to help come closer to God, as Christ's mission on earth showed. Pointing to asceticism, he stated that contrary to what many think, asceticism was not a way to escape the material world but a life aimed at purifying the material world to get closer to God.

Chrysostom drew from Paul's example of using sporting images to teach on the good life, with God as our 'trainer' who is the perfect example of how to live a good life.²⁵ Similarly, Clement of Alexandria says that the baths should be used with the good intention of improving health, cleansing the skin and generate warmth, and so one should not indulge in them.²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa and Tertullian agreed with this proposition.

The biggest problem with sport was that it was too associated with pagan rituals, making it dangerous to anyone who wanted to follow Christ. Sport brought pleasure, an aspect which was regarded as focusing too much on the body and forgetting the good of the soul, and so sport could not be endorsed by the Christian (think of the martyrs who were regarded as the highest form of giving one's life for one's faith). Sport also made people

²² Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic Perspectives on Sports*, 93.

²³ Fr Patrick M. Kelly SJ received his doctorate in theology, ethics and culture at the School of Religion of the Claremont Graduate University in 2005. Fr. Kelly, who is associate professor of theology and religious studies at Seattle University, teaches and writes on sports and theology and how sports relates to human development and spirituality, while also teaches in the areas of Christianity and cultures, theological anthropology, Christian spirituality and interreligious dialogue. He is an editor of the *International Journal of Religion and Sport* and member of the International Association for Philosophers of Sport. (<https://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/undergraduate-degrees/theology/faculty-and-staff/patrick-kelly-sj-phd.html>).

²⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, quoted in Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic Perspectives on Sports*, 9.

²⁵ Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 58, quoted in Alois Koch SJ, *Biblical and Patristic Foundations for Sport*, in Kevin Lixey, Christoph Hubenthal, Dietmar Mieth and Norbert Muller (eds), *Sport and Christianity: A Sign of the Times in the Light of Faith*, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 81-103.

²⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* III.9, quoted in Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 29.

“mad, angry and discordant.”²⁷ One of the few positive references of the use of Christianity in sport was by Jerome who recounts the story of Hilarion, a man who blessed his horses and stables to counter the spells of his rivals²⁸, though this still refers to sport’s evil aspects. The first Council of Arles in 314 AD decreed that Christians should stay away from gladiators and charioteers; with excommunication facing anyone who went against this.²⁹

Constantine, in the wake of Christianity becoming the favoured religion of the Empire, banned gladiatorial games in the year 325, but it was not until the fifth century that gladiatorial schools were closed. The Christian negative view on sport led to all games being banned; with the Roman Emperor Theodosius I abolishing the Olympic Games in 393 because of their pagan influences³⁰ and the Temple of Zeus in Olympia being burned down by the year 420.

In contrast, when the Modern Olympic Games had been re-established, they received the blessing of Pope Pius X. In 1896, Baron Pierre de Coubertin spearheaded the organisation of the modern Olympics, with the motto ‘Citius, Altius, Fortius – Faster, Higher, Stronger’ being coined by Fr Henri Didon OP.³¹ Briefly looking at these games, we can say that the first modern games were held in Greece with the aim of using athletics for the physical benefits of individuals, as well as a means for peace and conflict prevention among nations.³² Coubertin wanted the Olympic Games to be “a supreme consecration of the cult of athletics practised in the purest spirit of true sport proudly, joyfully, loyally.”³³ The core values of modern Olympism are excellence, respect, and friendship and hold five educational themes: joy of effort, fair play, practising respect,

²⁷ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 30.

²⁸ Jerome, *The Life of Hilarion XVI and XX*, quoted in Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 31.

²⁹ Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils from the Original Documents*, 2nd ed, 1.3.15. London:T&T Clark, 1883, pg.185-187, quoted in Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 31.

³⁰ Jennifer Rosenberg, “History of the Olympics: Creating the modern Olympic Games,” *ThoughtCo.*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-the-olympics-1779619>.

³¹ Alois Koch, “Pierre de Coubertin and his Relation to the Catholic Church,” *Begegnung: Schriftenreihe zur Geschichte der Beziehung zwischen Christentum und Sport*, W. Schwank & A. Koch (ed.), vol. 5 (2005): 33-75. (cited and translation found in <http://www.con-spiration.de/koch/english/coubertin-e.html>).

³² Robert McNamara, “Biography of Pierre de Coubertin, Founder of the Modern Olympics,” *ThoughtCo.*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/modern-olympics-founder-pierre-de-coubertin-1773993>.

³³ Norbert Müller (ed.), *Pierre de Coubertin: Olympism Selected Writings* (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 2000), 543-544.

pursuit of excellence, and the balance between body, will and mind.³⁴ All these reflect the Catholic influence on these games; an influence which came from Coubertin's upbringing and environment.

Going back to the pagan games, Chariot racing on the other hand remained popular until the eleventh century, and Emperor Theodoric knew how to use these positively. He controlled when they were held and changed pagan symbols to Christian ones; with the sign of the cross made at the beginning and hymns glorifying God and Mary sung.³⁵

In light of all this, we can say that the early Church looked at sport in three ways: at its instrumentality in the way it can be used, in opposition to its negative aspects, and at its popularity with the people.³⁶

1.1.3 - Sport and the Medieval church

This approach towards sport continued also through the Middle Ages. Harvey uses the sport of jousting as an example. Jousting, a sporting contest in which two opponents on horseback clash into each other with lances, was usually paired with another contest; that of sword fighting. This sport had replaced chariot racing in popularity from the late eleventh century up until the seventeenth century; most prominently in northern France and the Iberian Peninsula.³⁷ The prize knights battled for was land, honour and prestige. What started out as battle training developed into regulated contests similar to what we now refer to as professional sport.

Stadiums were built for such events and soon these became widely followed organised sports festivals; with week-long tournaments organised in various cities in Europe. These festivals only comprised of about two or three days of games; the rest was made up of theatrical performances and banqueting. The tournaments gave the possibility of winning prize money and a chance for knights to win the hand of a lady; making jousting knights popular social and sporting figures. This made these tournaments more than just

³⁴ International Olympic Committee, *The Fundamentals of Olympic Values Education: A Sports based programme* (2nd ed.) (Switzerland, 2016), 17-18.

³⁵ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

sport, but a spectacle in themselves. Some people question whether these events were disguising war-like encounters and adultery (as a result of the erotic undercurrent in the festivities) as civilised meetings.³⁸ What is sure is that the combination of the two made these events very popular.

This sport of tourneying (from the Old French word *tornoier*, meaning ‘to joust’, ‘to turn around’ – resulting in the word ‘tournament’)³⁹ was opposed by the Church.⁴⁰ One reason for such opposition was that it promoted a culture of war which the Church was trying to change. Another reason was that such a sport took the knights’ focus away from the Holy War: the Crusades. The Crusades were portrayed as the honourable route a knight should take, opposing the decadence tourneying showed. Many bishops and preachers started mocking knights who took part in tournaments while praising those taking part in the Crusades; with knights who die during tournaments even denied a proper Christian burial. Other priests were less harsh but still preached against the values these tournaments projected. In 1130, Pope Innocent banned tournaments through the Ninth Canon of the Council of Clermont; a ban which was confirmed various times and lasted till the early fourteenth century when John XXII overturned the ban after the Church’s opposition to such a sport left no effect on the sport’s popularity.⁴¹

Rather than based on theological reasoning, this was a pragmatic decision since Pope John XXII saw tourneying as a chance to stir support for the Church’s military missions. The sport’s popularity led to the Church changing her tune. Tournaments, with their high pageantry and chivalry culture, started to accompany marriages and coronations, and masses and blessings were offered before tournaments. The culmination came when a jousting tournament was held in 1471 in the site where we now find St. Peter’s Square.⁴²

Interestingly, in Gloucester Cathedral, England, we find various sports representations from the fourteenth century. On glass windows and carved in wood, we find images of someone playing a game similar to golf, one of two people who seem to be bouncing a

³⁸ Ibid., 41.

³⁹ “Tournament (n.),” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed December 2, 2019, https://www.etymonline.com/word/tourney?ref=etymonline_crossreference.

⁴⁰ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 41.

⁴¹ Ibid., 42-44.

⁴² Ibid., 45.

ball, and another doing some sort of equestrian. Christians used to celebrate feasts and holy days by playing sports.⁴³

In all this we again see the three views of the Church towards sport – popularity, opposition and instrumentality.

1.1.4 - Saint Thomas Aquinas and Sport

A theologian who put sport in a positive light is St. Thomas Aquinas, whose understanding of play and recreation shown that there can be a “virtue about games” since virtue has to do with moderation. He stated that there is a need for the right balance between work and play in the life of a virtuous person.⁴⁴ Sport is important because it can help a person keep the right balance, since too little or too much play could bring an imbalance, possibly leading to sin. If one remains without any level of enjoyment in life it could result in sin since it would be burdensome to the self, while too much enjoyment is also a sin since it goes beyond what is reasonable.⁴⁵

Aquinas also says that sport (play) offers satisfaction and has a value in itself; thus it is not exercised to achieve other purposes.⁴⁶ Later on, Golub and Romano Guardini both built on this idea. Quoting Guardini, from the book ‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’, Golub says that just like art, sport does not have a purpose other than itself but it does have a meaning which is similarly to liturgy; in that it has a meaning in front of God and is able to unite one more with God.⁴⁷ Golub also said that the characteristic of unity and collectivity found in God (the singularity and plurality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), is also present in the Church and in play. Thus, through play (playing as a member in a group) humans are able to participate in the mystery of the Trinity.⁴⁸

⁴³ Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic perspectives on sports*, 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 168,” New Advent, accessed October 15, 2019, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3168.htm>.

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, 1864, quoted in Ivan Golub, *El Ultimo Dia de la Creacion*, 98.

⁴⁷ Ivan Golub. *El Ultimo Dia de la Creacion*, 119.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

1.1.5 - Humanists and Jesuits

During the Renaissance period, humanists and early Jesuits used St. Thomas Aquinas' view on virtue when play time and recreation was introduced in educational institutions. Both humanists and Jesuits provided education to many, and they saw the aspect of recreation as being very important in their school system; a view which led to schools later on adopting recreation times in their programme.⁴⁹ The Jesuits also emphasised full recreation days. This takes us back to that mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when we referred to Plato and Aristotle teaching in gymnasia. The Greeks saw sports as an important part of life and so it was obvious for it to be included in the education process.⁵⁰

The sixteenth century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, reflecting on humanist education from his time, wrote that "We are not bringing up a soul; we are not bringing up a body: we are bringing up a man. We must not split him into two."⁵¹

St. Ignatius of Loyola encouraged the members of the Society of Jesus to take care of the body. Through a letter to Francis Borgia in 1548, who later on became a main promoter of the importance of physical exercise in schools, Ignatius stated that one must give a good accounting of one's body and soul to the Lord and so must "not let the bodily nature become weakened; for if it is weak, the inward nature will no longer be able to function properly."⁵²

Kelly also referred to the Jesuits' appreciation of Native American sports which they encountered in their missionary exploits. Still, and here again the previously mentioned tension between sports and religion comes into play, some of these games were referred to as having healing powers by the Native Americans and this was spoken against by many Jesuits. It is not sport in itself which is seen as wrong, but rather that which it is related to, in this case superstition.⁵³

⁴⁹ Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic perspectives on sports*, 37.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵¹ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays: A Selection*, Michael Screech (ed. and trans.) (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 60.

⁵² Martin E. Palmer, SJ, John W. Padberg, SJ, John L. McCarthy, SJ (eds.), *Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions*, no. 23 in Series I: Jesuit Primary Sources in English Translations (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 254-255.

⁵³ Patrick Kelly SJ, *Catholic perspectives on sports*. 58.

1.1.6 - Sport and the Protestant Reformation

Sport's instrumentality for the Church was also witnessed following the Protestant Reformation, especially in Puritanism, in which hard-work and sacrifice are seen as essential characteristics on the Christian's path to salvation. Although in the beginning sport was seen as a distraction from what one is supposed to focus on in a Christian life, in time the good qualities sport promotes started to be seen as good training towards the work ethic.

This is the outlook Harvey presents, saying that many protestants were in majority in favour of sports. Kelly disagrees with this stance, saying that protestants, through their Waldensian forefathers and then mainly through John Calvin, opposed sports and looked negatively at the material world. According to Kelly, this position remained until the nineteenth century, but it was in the Catholic Church that the material world continued to be seen as essential to one's Christian life. Whereas Puritans saw the recreation on feast days and holidays as a waste of time and as days which drew one away from God, the Catholic Church continued to promote this culture through schools.⁵⁴ Sport probably became another point of contention between protestant churches and Catholics. Through time, both have developed different ways of looking at sport and applying it to their mission.

Harvey points to some examples of protestants' positive views of sports. John Winthrop, an American Puritan leader, though stating that recreation could be a distraction in one's life, admitted that exercise could leave one refreshed and live a better life dedicated to God. English Puritan Richard Baxter backed the view that physical activity could be a vice if it becomes its own end but good if it serves a higher end. Physical activity can help fight fatigue and boredom. Officials at Harvard College included a couple of hours of exercise in students' timetable for these same reasons.

Still, some Puritans saw sports and fun as taking Christians away from what is most important. Later on, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, evangelical leaders such as Edward Irving and Samuel Earnshaw opposed this view and stated that, although pleasure can lead to sin, sport can in fact help control pleasure. The idea of Muscular

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14-20.

Christianity resulted from this perspective, which saw the body as means to attain virtue, such as endurance, temperance, self-restraint, discipline, fairness, daring, honour and a way of socialising. Christ was also seen as a man who had persevered a lot through his body.⁵⁵

Schools and parish churches were embracing this mentality by the late-nineteenth century, with sports clubs also being formed, such as a cricket and football club at St. Andrew's Fulham Fields ; now becoming Fulham FC. Everton FC were founded in 1879 when a team from St. Domingo's Church played against St. Peter's Church. St. Mark's Church football team (St. Mark's West Gorton FC) was also set up in 1879 to help create a good community spirit between those unemployed in the area and was open to men from all religions. This team became Manchester City FC.⁵⁶

The Scottish club Celtic was formed by Catholic Irish immigrants in 1887 as a means to raise funds for local Catholic parishes. This football club served as a way for these immigrants to keep their Irish identity while also gave them the opportunity to integrate into the Scottish community, in light of the discrimination they were facing from protestants in Scotland. The other big Scottish club Rangers (traditionally Protestant) became the greatest rival of Celtic, mainly due to the difference in religious and political beliefs. This rivalry is one of the fiercest in world football; an example of how sports could also be mixed with beliefs.⁵⁷

Even the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), formed in England in 1844 with the aim of reaching young men for Christ, became a hub for sports activity, and in fact it was in this setting that the sports of basketball and volleyball were created.⁵⁸

Being able to live a good Christian life through fun and sport had one setback to this same Christian life – this was replacing the fundamental prayer life and Bible studies; that which more directly connects man to God. While the Catholic Church continued to focus on sports in schools and using sports in education and character building, seen in

⁵⁵ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 49-55.

⁵⁶ John Simkin, "Football and the Church," *Spartacus Educational*, accessed January 16, 2019, <https://spartacus-educational.com/FreligionG.htm>.

⁵⁷ James Kenny, "Celtic vs. Rangers: A Complete History of the Old Firm," *How They Play*, March 21, 2019, <https://howtheyplay.com/team-sports/Celtic-vs-Rangers-A-Complete-History-of-the-Old-Firm>.

⁵⁸ "History 1870s-1890s," the Y, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://www.ymca.net/history/1870-1890s.html>.

the previous examples of the Jesuits and through universities in the USA (such as the University of Notre Dame in Indiana where its sports teams reached high levels), protestant churches took a different turn and tried to find a solution to this setback sport brings.⁵⁹

Protestant churches developed ministries which started to focus on sports as means to bring people closer to God. The next part of this chapter will focus on such a development, but first we will look at the meaning of ministry, particularly sports ministry.

1.2 What is Christian Ministry and why Sports Ministry?

Christian ministry is an act of service, based on Christ's way of life, and is an expression of one's faith.⁶⁰ In the second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God was making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). Through ministry, and through the diversity of the different ministries, a person can encounter Christ. So through Sports Ministry one would be able to encounter Christ through sports.

With billions of people playing or following sports, it can easily be said that sport affects the lives of many people, so the Church must serve these people through something they love in a way that brings them closer to Christ. Such ministry would help people delve deeper into the meaning of sport in their lives and learn to use this passion in order to grow spiritually and in faith.

⁵⁹ Lincoln Harvey, *Theology of Sport*, 49-55.

⁶⁰ International Sports Ministry, "Vision," *The Salvation Army*, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.salvationarmy.org/sportsministry/vision>.

1.3 The development of sports ministries

The mid-twentieth century saw a rise in sports ministries, especially in the United States. The pioneer organisations were the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) and the Athletes in Action (AIA).

1.3.1 - Fellowship of Christian Athletes

In 1947, young basketball coach Don McClanen felt inspired by God to start an organisation of Christian professional athletes with the target of changing the youth culture in America. In a letter sent to nineteen professional athletes, he wrote:

For some time, I have had the idea of forming an organization of athletes and coaches in this hero-worshiping nation of ours. If athletes can endorse shaving cream, razor blades and cigarettes, surely they can endorse the Lord, too. So my idea is to form an organization that would project you as Christian men before the youth and athletes of our nation.⁶¹

On the 10th of November 1954, this organisation became the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA).⁶² Its aim was to have a number of top-level athletes go around public spaces, such as schools, universities and churches, speaking about their experience of Christ. McClanen's idea was to capitalise on the phenomenon of 'hero-worship'; where youths worship popular personalities and follow the trends that these set. In the same way, through this campaign, youths may come to follow their favourite athletes into following Christ. An article on this initiative was also issued on the popular sports magazine 'Sports Illustrated'.⁶³ The FCA started to have full-time board members.

As of 1956, sports camps started to be organised, initially referred to as a National Conference, with the first one held in Denver themed: 'I am The Way, The Truth and The Life'. A total of 256 participants attended this conference, some of whom were coaches, high school and college students. Along the years participants grew into thousands.

⁶¹ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Don McClanen invitation letter quote," *timeline.fca*, January 4, 2016, <https://timeline.fca.org/don-mcclanen-invitation-letter-quote/>.

⁶² Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Presentation Video...65 years and counting," *timeline.fca*, March 26, 2014, <https://timeline.fca.org/presentation-video-60-years-and-counting/>.

⁶³ Sports Illustrated, "Hero Worship Harnassed," *Vault*, article from February 6, 1956 issue, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.si.com/vault/1956/02/06/604630/hero-worship-harnassed>.

These camps covered a number of sports activities which balanced with a time of prayer and inspirational talks. It was stated that each conference had 50 percent time for perspiration and 50 percent for inspiration.⁶⁴ In his opening address, Branch Rickey, a sports executive who helped McClanen to found FCA, stated that all involved must “proceed to the task [the aim of the organisation] with conviction, with contriteness and with courage even to the point of ardor.”⁶⁵

The FCA started to publish its own magazine, first the ‘Christian Athlete’ in 1959, then renamed ‘Sharing the Victory’ (in 1982) and now known as the ‘FCA Magazine’ (since 2012). The second issue of this magazine underlined the deep relationship of the FCA with the Church, highlighting that anyone who participated in the conferences had to have a signature of their pastor. It also explained how the leaders and participants of the FCA came from different theological backgrounds, and so, while not looking to water down these differences nor debate them, the aim of the Fellowship was to “bear witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to the centrality of the Church in the life of the Christian.”⁶⁶ This issue also included a Bible study article called ‘The Huddle’ and an announcement of upcoming events, which included conferences taking places in different areas of the country as well as youth rallies made up of about 700 to 800 people.

The FCA also produced films to be shown to children in schools as a way of teaching them about sports and faith. Today, the FCA has twenty different Athlete’s Bibles, translated into seven different languages, and in 2018 alone has distributed almost 300,000 copies worldwide.⁶⁷ In 1966, the Huddle Program was established, promoting groups of athletes who grow together, while being provided with a tool-kit of resources and a programme for leaders to follow in these group sport sessions. The year 1967 gave birth to the Weekend of Champions, the first held in Kansas City, where a weekend long

⁶⁴ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, “Three summer conferences climax FCA year,” from ‘The Christian Athlete’ article of September 1963, *timeline.fca*, February 11, 2014, <https://timeline.fca.org/three-summer-conferences-climax-fca-year/>.

⁶⁵ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, “Branch Rickey’s Speech to FCA,” *timeline.fca*, November 15, 2013, <https://timeline.fca.org/branch-rickeys-speech/>.

⁶⁶ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, “FCA and the Church,” article from ‘The Christian Athlete’, Vol.1, No.2., April 1959, *timeline.fca*, accessed July 17, 2019, <http://timeline.fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FCAandTheChurch.jpg>.

⁶⁷ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, “Fulfilling the Vision: 2018 Digital Ministry Report,” *2018.fca*, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://2018.fca.org/>.

programme covered talks in school assemblies, visiting detention homes, a banquet, speaking in Church on Sunday and finishing with a rally attended by 11,000 people.

In 1974, the FCA National Resource Center in western Indiana was inaugurated to host the various conferences taking place. Its aim was to provide a multifaceted ministry to sports, church and community groups, and thus encompassed a chapel, gymnasium, assembly hall, extensive athletic fields and other structures. The National Support Center, first known as the FCA's World Headquarters built in 1979, gave a better identity to this organisation which now had a building of its own.

Probably one of the first direct collaborations in sports ministry was the FCA partnering with the Salvation Army in 1985 to reach inner-city youth and bring them to the FCA camps.⁶⁸ Interestingly, in an American football match between Oklahoma and Nebraska in 1986, ten FCA players, five from each side, joined in prayer before kick-off to become what is known as the first organised joint prayer in sports history.

Along the years various other programmes were developed. The first were specific sports ministries, starting with golf in 1977, followed by Urban Ministry (1988), the CHAD (camps, huddles, adult chapters, development) programme in 1988 (thus putting the various event into one complementary programme), and the One Way 2 Play - Drug Free! Programme in 1991. In 1995 the FCA website was launched, thus bringing a new medium and dimension to their mission.⁶⁹ This has helped the Fellowship keep better contact with participants, promote the mission more, spread resources and information better while also gather more donations.

In 2002, the FCA took a clearer vision by defining the Four Cs of its ministry – coaches, camps, campus, and community; thus deciding to focus on the realities faced and found in these areas.⁷⁰ Here it must be highlighted that the first priority is given to the coaches, those who lead and teach athletes into becoming good Christians. Once the leaders (coaches) are well prepared they are able to welcome athletes to the camps, while at

⁶⁸ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "FCA and Salvation Army partner to reach inner-city youth," *timeline.fca*, September 18, 2014, <https://timeline.fca.org/fca-and-salvation-army-partner-to-reach-inner-city-youth/>.

⁶⁹ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Fellowship of Christian Athletes Timeline," *timeline.fca*, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://timeline.fca.org>.

⁷⁰ Fellowship of Christian Athletes Timeline, "FCA Introduces Four Cs of Ministry," *timeline.fca*, April 28, 2014, <https://timeline.fca.org/fca-introduces-four-cs-of-ministry/>.

the same time go out on the campus and in the community to find new disciples of Christ. The Competitor's Creed defined in 2003 also introduced the idea of Team FCA, the concept that all who profess this creed, ending with the words: 'Let the competition begin, let the glory be God's', form part of this big team.⁷¹ 2004 saw the beginning of a new initiative, the Fields of Faith event in schools where students gather on athletic fields, read Scripture, and decide on a personal commitment in relation to God in order to improve their lives. This initiative followed the realisation of an increasing problem, that of 80% of the youth who attend church stop attending between the seventh and twelfth grades, and was inspired by King Josiah's experience in 2 Chronicles 34 when he challenged his people to read the Word of God and in turn came to change their lives.⁷² In 2007, the FCA through their Four Cs of ministry managed to reach more than two million participants. As an organisation, it is now divided into twelve regions in the country for better administration and efficiency, while also connected with its worldwide ministry, divided into various Global Regions. Some of the athletes involved went on to become full-time ministers.

1.3.2 - Athletes in Action

In 1966, the Athletes in Action (AIA) ministry started, a ministry which falls under the Campus Crusade for Christ ministry, or how it is now known, Cru.⁷³ Campus Crusade for Christ was founded in 1951 by Bill and Vonette Bright at the University of California in Los Angeles and has since become one of the biggest Christian ministries in the world, spreading also into various pastoral areas.⁷⁴ Athletes in Action promote Victory beyond Competition and so are focused on "equipping athletes, coaches, and sport-minded individuals to grow in their relationship with Jesus and multiply their life into others."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "FCA Introduces Team FCA and the Competitor's Creed," *timeline.fca*, April 28, 2014, <https://timeline.fca.org/fca-introduces-team-fca-and-the-competitors-creed/>.

⁷² Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Fields of Faith held for first time," *timeline.fca*, December 2, 2013, <https://timeline.fca.org/fields-of-faith-held-for-first-time/>.

⁷³ CRU, "Athletes in Action," *CRU*, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/communities/athletes/athletes-in-action-overview.html>.

⁷⁴ CRU, "Our Leadership," *CRU*, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/our-leadership/our-founders.html>.

⁷⁵ Athletes in Action, "About," *Athletes in Action*, accessed July 22, 2019, https://athletesinaction.org/about#.XTWBm_ZuJPY.

Serving in more than ninety countries, more than two hundred college campuses and forty professional clubs, while also having very good and vast digital resources available online, they ultimately aim to “see Christ-followers on every team, in every sport, in every nation.”⁷⁶ The most influential way for this to happen is to have athletes who themselves have experienced and built a relationship with Christ to share their stories with others, and thus the main work Athletes In Action does is create platforms for such to take place. AIA produce a lot of material to help athletes reflect on their personal journeys in sports and in life while also provide training opportunities for athletes to lead others.

1.3.3 - Christians in Sport

The world of tennis brought together Gerald Williams (a BBC commentator), Rev. Alan Godson, Eddie (an American sports evangelist), Wimbledon champion Stan Smith and businessman Kenneth Frampton to start meeting and praying for what became known as prayerful action. This group grew into becoming the UK based charity ‘Christians in Sport’.

They started meeting for luncheons to discuss and pray over their “desire to live and share their faith in the world of sport.”⁷⁷ On February 18th 1976, a memo between them suggested that they pray for five goals: to have 18-20 men for their luncheon in March 1976, that 120 attend their dinner in June, that through the Lord’s intervention a man could offer enough time to administrate a sports fellowship for the nation, that fellowship groups would be established for professional athletes in all of England, and that England would be an example for European nations to start such fellowships. Prayer and networking was crucial in all this. The mission was to be served in sports fields and clubhouses, and their enthusiasm showed them that God was inviting them to use their sporting desires, gifts and opportunities to live out their faith in the context of sports.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Christians in Sport, “History,” *Christians in Sport*, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.christiansinsport.org.uk/about/history/>.

Gerald Williams stated that “We had a feeling that God could do something through Christians in sport if they made themselves available to Him.”

The first dinner gathering was in London on June 19th 1976 and eighty Christian sportspersons attended, one of them being Brian Adams who was part of the British Race Walking team at the Montreal Olympics and stated that “it was great to be sent off to the Olympics with the mindset that what I’m doing in sport is for God” and continued by saying that his “identity is in Christ and sport is an expression of that identity.”⁷⁸ Andrew Wingfield-Digby, a former Oxford University bowler and Anglican minister, remarked that “people were excited that there was a marriage of sport and faith. Everyone wanted to raise the profile of Christian presence in sport.”⁷⁹

More dinners were organised and the numbers continued to increase, leading to conferences and meetings to take place. What was prayed for through the 1976 memo was being answered, and Andrew Wingfield-Digby left the Anglican clergy to become the full time director of ‘Christians in Sport’. Today this organisation supports more than 10,000 Christians in the world of sport and has partnered with ministries in more than 150 countries.

Their mission is simple – “everything we do is aimed at reaching the world of sport for Jesus”, and they have a clear, defined three-year plan based on engaging sports people with the Good News of Jesus Christ, expanding to new places and elite sports, and enabling this work to grow.⁸⁰ Pragmatically, the aim is for this to happen in 300 cities by 2020 and through nine elite sports.⁸¹

1.3.4 - The 1980s: The rise of more sports ministries

Many other sports ministry organisations started to develop along the years, especially in the U.S. By the 1980s, there were also many local and international protestant churches engaging in their own sports ministries, using sport, recreation and fitness in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Christians in Sport, “Game Plan 4: Our three year plan Sep2017-Aug2020,” *issuu*, January 10, 2018, https://issuu.com/cisuk/docs/gp4_v8_issuu.

⁸¹ Christians in Sport, “Mission,” *Christians in Sport*, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.christiansinsport.org.uk/about/mission/>.

their outreach, and well as developing athletic facilities. In 1988, a small group of Local Church Sports Outreach Pastors, sensing the feeling of isolation, under-appreciation, and tiredness felt by many sport ministers, as well as the lack of resources they had available, started to communicate between them to find a solution, leading to the launch of the Church Sports & Recreation Ministries (CSRM). The main aim was of ongoing support to these many sports ministries, and a board representing many denominations was elected in 1994.⁸² Various umbrella sports ministry organisations were forming and today many Church denominations have their own sports ministries.

In Europe too, such alliances started to take place. In 1989, five sports missionaries from different denominations, coming from four European countries, met at the SRS headquarters in Altenkirchen, Germany. The SRS (Sportler ruft Sportler – Athlete calls Athlete) is a Christian non-profit organisation founded in 1971 in Germany. During this meeting, the European Christian Sport Union (ECSU) started, with the aim of creating a supporting network of human and material resources for the various organisations affiliated in it. The ECSU defines itself as “a partnership of churches, sports mission agencies and individuals that together want to see every sports person in Europe become a Christ follower and every community in Europe impacted through sport for Christ.”⁸³

Today, the ECSU is present in 48 countries and its members include individuals from ‘Christians in Sport’, SRS, and Athletes in Action among others. A central element of this union, a trait seen also in the ‘Christians in Sport’ mission, is the prayer offered for the various activities that take place and the great desire to reach all places in order to spread God’s message.⁸⁴

Now we will look at how the Catholic Church developed her own form of sports ministry.

⁸² Church Sports & Recreation Ministries, “Our history and what we believe,” *The Association of Church Sports & Recreation Ministries*, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://www.csrn.org/history-and-what-we-believe.html>.

⁸³ European Christian Sports Union, “About the ECSU,” *ECSU*, accessed August 29, 2019, <http://www.ecsu.eu/ABOUT/>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

1.4 Sports Ministries within the Catholic Church

We have seen throughout history how the Catholic Church has responded to sports; how at times she went against it and how at others managed to use it for her own good. At times the focus was on how sports could be used for the good of the Church as an institution. Ultimately, the good of the human being and the spiritual benefits or not received through sports were what the Church was after.

Also throughout history, the benefits of sport have been highlighted and so started to be used in an organised way by members of the Catholic Church. We have already referred to St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits' views and application of sport in their mission, now we will focus on another saint's work, Saint John Bosco, who is more commonly associated with sport and its role in character building.

1.4.1 - Saint John Bosco and the Salesians

Saint John Bosco is probably the first saint that comes to mind when one speaks of sport and the Catholic Church. Following his priestly ordination in 1841⁸⁵, he started to take care of children who lived in troublesome times in Turin, Italy; organising hikes and activities for them, welcoming them from the streets into his home, and later on opened an Oratory for them.

Bosco, and later on the Salesian order which he founded in 1859, put sport and recreation at the centre of all this activity. Seeing that the Oratory at Valdocco was becoming too small, Bosco opened various youth centres around Turin aimed at becoming a home, a parish, a school and a playground for these children.⁸⁶ These were places where children could feel loved and cared for, could grow in a family, could be educated, taught skills and be given values on which to build their lives. They were places where they could grow psychologically and spiritually, a place where they could meet God and make an experience of him in their lives. The playground complemented all

⁸⁵ Catholic Online, "St. John Bosco," *catholic.org*, accessed August 26, 2019, https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=63.

⁸⁶ Leanne D'Amato, "Making disciples on the field: Sports and recreation as tools for Salesian Youth Ministry" (Masters thesis, University of Malta, 2018), 17.

that was being done as it offered a ground where children and youths could actively live the values being given; growing in virtue and positively expressing themselves. The playground offered a time of relaxation and enthusiasm; bringing joy and life to these centres.

Key to this 'programme' leaving a positive effect on the children and youths was the attitude with which these youth centres were run. Don Bosco inculcated a 'preventive system' in the Salesians which gave space for children to express themselves freely and in the right manner, not to avoid punishment but because it would be the right thing to do.⁸⁷ Such a system contrasted with the 'repressive system' so common at the time, and sometimes still today, which was all about frightening children through punishment. Love and service offered to the children would bring respect and obedience. This also required continuous presence by the Salesians. The 'preventive system' has three pillars: religion, reason, and loving kindness. These three aspects work together to help one make a fuller experience of life. Teaching and showing youth how to live what religion teaches and to make the most of what it offers, demonstrating how reason helps in making the right choice, and presenting all of this in a kind manner, can go a long way in forming the individual. This system instilled confidence and interior peace in the youths, two aspects which could help them mature and reach out for more in their lives, thus also being able to reach further to God. These are the foundations with which the Salesians still operate today.

The example of the Salesian oratories spread all over Italy and in the world not only within the Salesian network. In all cases, sport and recreation remained an integral part of what happens at these oratories.

1.4.2 - The Catholic Action and the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*

On the 23rd of August 1906, the Catholic Action in Italy, through the Catholic politician Mario Gabrielli Conte di Carpegna, started the *Federazione delle associazioni sportive cattoliche italiane* (FASCI) with the aim of organising and coordinating sports within a

⁸⁷ Ibid., 21.

Catholic setting. This federation started with sixteen sport societies, with only male athletes able to form part of it. The FASCI also had its own publication called *Stadium*.⁸⁸

The age old debate witnessed in the Church as to whether sport is of benefit or not to the people resurfaced again during this time. There seemed to be a consensus that only gymnastics and gym exercises were able to form the young catholic person and equip him with what is needed for life. All other sport events were dangerous and were only bound to offer interest in a lucrative life. Ultimately, as also seen before, it was the youths' popular demand that chose what is wanted and needed, with many youths opting for football, pushing the Church into finding ways of introducing various sports into her oratories. By 1910 there were 204 societies involved, with about 10,000 people registered, making the FASCI the biggest sport organisation in Italy.

Apart from organising sports activities, the FASCI took the role of training coaches and technical personnel working in the field of sport as well as being the first sport organisation to develop an insurance for those having sports injuries.

In 1911, together with nine organisations from different countries, it became part of the *Union internationale des oeuvres catholiques d'éducation physique*, today the *Fédération Internationale Catholique d'Education Physique et sportive* (FICEP). This organisation aims at linking Catholic sport organisations and help in the development of activities based on Christian principles. It promotes Christian education in families and professional set-ups, while also encouraging international meetings and competitions.⁸⁹

In 1927, due to the fascist rule in Italy, there was the dissolution of the FASCI and the 'Forza e grazia' movement, which had formed in 1923 with the aim of working exclusively with women. This came about because any activity that did not fall directly under fascist authority had to stop. All social, and sport activity, had fallen under the competence of the National Fascist Party.

Like any other revival after the war, the FASCI too had the chance to re-establish, although in a new format and aim. On the 5th of January 1944, just before the Liberation

⁸⁸ Centro Sportivo Italiano, "IL CSI: La nostra storia," *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, accessed August 6, 2019, <https://csi-net.it/index.php?action=pspagina&idPSPagina=2140>.

⁸⁹ Union of International Associations, "International Catholic Federation of Physical Education and Sports," *UIA*, accessed August 12, 2019, <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100010976>.

of Rome during the Second World War, the Catholic Action accepted Luigi Gedda's proposal of opening the *Centro Sportivo Italiano* (CSI), no longer simply for Catholic sport associations similar to what FASCI was, but as one able to reach all the youths in Italy. This was a new kind of apostolic outreach.

The first statute of the CSI stated the role of "developing sports activities ... with a Christian spirit ... and being a valid means of safeguarding morality and of perfecting the psychophysical aspects of the individual."⁹⁰ The cardinal principle of the organisation is that the CSI is "promoted by Christians, but is open to all and is willing to collaborate with all who work for a sport which is at the service of humans."⁹¹ Though the CSI was open to all, it mainly operated within a parochial and religious institute setting due to Italy still being socially under construction.

Also in 1944, the youth female section within the Catholic Action started the *Federazione Attività Recreative Italiane* (FARI) for women, with the aim of helping groups which want to do recreative and sports activities and aid them in providing technical and spiritual formation to directors, instructors and members towards a greater respect for the moral and health principles of sport. The CSI and FARI were working closely together, and both recognised the importance and worked on promoting sports in schools. They wanted to move away from the traditional way that sport was seen in schools, a way that was even more highlighted during the fascist regime, which was that sport just meant physical exercise aimed at creating strong adults for military purposes. They wanted sport to fully enter in schools with all its different aspects, mainly because in schools there was the necessary environment, harmony, intuition, emulation, and understanding needed for sport to truly grow and for one to get the most out of it. For this reason various sports competitions for different categories started to be organised.

These two branches within the Catholic Action focused mostly on the strategic structure of sport, but the whole idea was promoted by the words of Pius XII, nicknamed the 'Pope of sportspeople', who stated that "now is the time for action. The race which St. Paul

⁹⁰ Centro Sportivo Italiano, "IL CSI: La nostra storia."

⁹¹ "Il CSI è promosso da cristiani, ma è aperto a tutti e collabora con quanti si impegnano per uno sport a servizio dell'uomo." Centro Sportivo Italiano, "IL CSI: La nostra storia."

speaks about is ongoing.”⁹² In his discourse on the 7th of September 1947, Pius XII said that even the smallest of details can decide victory, and referring to Gino Bartali, a Catholic Action member and multiple winner of both the Giro d’Italia and Tour de France, as a motivation to the youths, he told them that they can race towards an even bigger and nobler prize.

The work of the CSI continued to increase by organising, together with the *Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano* (CONI) and other sports associations, events for members of all ages, backgrounds and sport disciplines. By 1955 this had developed into various regional and provincial committees, 3,000 sport societies and around 80,000 members. For the 10th anniversary a huge celebration took place at St. Peter’s Square in the Vatican in front of Pius XII. Here again, the Pontiff underlined the ethical and physical benefits of sports. Sport should be promoted as means towards a more courageous and optimistic life, and one which is superior to material obsessions; a way towards a personal, spiritual and physical overhaul. At the same time, the Pope stated the role of the *Centro Sportivo Italiano* is to help the Church in improving the deficiencies in sports which go against the principles and dignity of the Christian. He said that Catholic sports organisations should not only be there to act, preserve and conserve sport but must animate it in a Christian way, especially through example. Pius XII’s discourse can be summed up in this statement: "You, the leaven of Christianity, will therefore be in the stadiums, on the roads, on the mountains, at the sea, wherever your banner is raised with honour".⁹³

The CSI and FARI continued to work together so much so that in 1971 the two organisations joined together to form one *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, where males and females had co-responsibility of all decisions and activities.

The 50th anniversary of the CSI brought a turning point in the approach towards sport following an audience with Pope John Paul II on 25th June 1994. In 1997, the organisation embarked on *‘Stadium: lo sport incontra la piazza’*, a new project which moved sport from the stadium to the village square, so that the village square became the new

⁹² Antonella Stelitano, Alejandro Mario Dieguez, Quirino Bortolato, *I Papi e lo Sport: Oltre un secolo di incontri e interventi da San Pio X a Papa Francesco*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), 62.

⁹³ "Lievito di cristianesimo voi dunque sarete negli stadi, sulle strade, sui monti, al mare, ovunque si innalza con onore il vostro vessillo." Ibid., 94.

stadium. Now sport was experienced through a wider perspective; being social, cultural, political and commercial, and its problems and prospective, its ideals and content, were faced. Sport created a space for encounter between people; a sport that was for all. The *Centro Sportivo Italiano* had long been studying the idea that sport was not simply about technical rules and competitions, but more about people and the identity and character of a whole nation. Sport was always much, much more. For this reason the CSI started creating events which were needed by the people, especially the youth, to help remodel society and engage different cultures together. It created alternative events to the usual traditional ones, thus being open to more and more people, not simply in stadiums or schools but in all public places. An example of this was the run organised during the Jubilee festivities in 1999 where a group of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic athletes ran from Jerusalem to St. Peter's Square, following St. Paul's footsteps towards Rome. For this same occasion, a sports village was set up which gave people the opportunity to play sports in a fun way while at the same time experiencing the values witnessed through sport.

We can understand this concept better through the title of a CSI conference held in 2002 – '*Dall'Italia che fa sport allo sport che fa l'Italia*' (a play with words which translates to: 'From an Italy which practices sport to sport which makes Italy').⁹⁴ Here, three fundamental pillars were defined as key in creating a sports policy: the formative aspect of sports, the centrality of sports organisations, and the sustaining of sport voluntarism. At the conference, Monsignor Betori emphasised the role of the Church in safeguarding the human aspect of sports, stating that the Church follows closely the developments that takes place within the sports world.⁹⁵

The *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, with more than 13,000 affiliated sports organisations and 1 million members, is ever more committed to promote sport and its values. It states 'Educate through sport' as its mission. Looking at the Milano section as an example, courses of formation and sports events are the two main activities which the CSI is involved in; with a variety of sports and obligatory courses for affiliated administrators,

⁹⁴ Centro Sportivo Italiano, "IL CSI: La nostra storia."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

delegates, officials, coaches, athletes and also parents. These mainly tackle the strategic aspects, the day-to-day administration and the life skills deriving from sports.⁹⁶

1.4.3 - FISEC

We also find an international collaboration between Catholic schools to promote sports involvement. The FISEC (International Sports Federation for Catholic Schools) was established in 1948 and currently has 13 member countries.⁹⁷ Its aim is to promote physical education and sport and further develop sport within the context of Catholic education, to facilitate encounters between youngsters, to study problems related to sport within the context of international (educational) organisations, to organise sports events which include cultural activities and exchanges to support FISEC's aims, and to contribute to mutual understanding and friendship between adults and youngsters in the increasingly globalising world.

The FISEC Games are organised annually to help reach these aims in a practical way and are also a good opportunity for athletes to practice sport at a high level. The instilling of human values, fair play, social and cultural aspects is key in what FISEC aims to achieve.

1.4.4 - Popes and Sport

Since Pope Pius X, popes have been welcoming, supporting and addressing sports events. Pius X's blessing of the Olympic Games has already been mentioned, but this was not uncommon, since the pope had been receiving various athletes from different events, especially those organised by Catholic organisations. The messages of the popes were always of admiration and praise of the commitment and sacrifice shown by the athletes. The popes offered continuous support to all organisations, seen mostly through the support of the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, and highlighted the educational aspect of sport.⁹⁸ The culmination of this support and involvement came with Pope John

⁹⁶ Centro Sportivo Italiano, "Piano formativo 2019-20," *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.csi.milano.it/area-formazione/piano-formativo-csi.html>.

⁹⁷ FISEC (Fédération Internationale Sportive de l'Enseignement Catholique), "Our Mission," *FISEC*, accessed August 8, 2019, <http://www.fisec.org/our-mission/>.

⁹⁸ Stelitano, Dieguez, and Bortolato, *I Papi e lo Sport*.

Paul II founding the 'Church and Sport' section, falling under the Pontifical Council for the Laity, in 2004. Saint John Paul II wanted to create this new office following his meeting with 80,000 young athletes at the Olympic Stadium in Rome during the Jubilee of 2000 with the aim of emphasising sport's role in "the building of a more humane, peaceful and just society as well as for evangelization".⁹⁹

The Second Vatican Council noted that sport can help "preserve equilibrium of spirit even in the community, and to establish fraternal relations among men of all conditions, nations and races."¹⁰⁰ Sport as a platform for unity and encounter has continued to be emphasised by many popes, the last being Pope Francis saying "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 environments we can see the value of sports as a place of unity and encounter between people. We reach great results, in sports as in life, together, as a team!"¹⁰¹

Conclusive points

Sport developed from its link to mythology and the ritualistic worship of the gods to being associated with philosophy and the experience of beauty and goodness of life in the gymnasias. In Christianity we witnessed the same shift, from sport being associated with paganism to sport which educates towards the living of a good Christian life. As we have seen in this chapter, sport can point towards who God is and the way he has created gratuitously, while games reflect what should truly be valued in life.

At times, as a Church, we have lost the ability to look at sport in this way; an aspect which is so natural to sport. In the next chapter we will focus on sports ministries which aim to continually rediscover how sport helps us to connect more with our lives and with God.

⁹⁹ Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, "Giving the Best of Yourself."

¹⁰⁰ Second Vatican Council, "*Gaudium et spes*," *vatican.va*, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 61.

¹⁰¹ Vatican News, "Pope: 'sport is a place of unity and encounter'," *vaticannews*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-06/pope-letter-kevin-farrell-sports-to-give-the-best-of-oneself.html>.

Chapter 2: Sports Ministries

Introduction

The second chapter will focus on the vision, mission and strategy of different sports ministries, also including all the developments and changes that have been happening in the Catholic Church in the last 15 years as regards sports ministry. A discussion of what a vision, mission, and strategy should consist of will follow, before the analyses of the various vision, mission and strategies presented and how these are connected and build on each other to help each organisation live out its calling. This chapter will then present that which has been taking place in the Church in Malta for a better understanding of the background within which the new sports ministry strategy will be developed.

2.1 Sports ministries' vision, mission and strategy

2.1.1 - Fellowship for Christian Athletes

The Fellowship for Christian Athletes defines a clear vision, mission, and strategy.¹ Its vision is 'To see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes', and its mission is to 'To lead every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.' It goes on to define a set values, inspired by Christ himself, which would help form the strategy; these being integrity, servitude, teamwork, and excellence (towards honouring and glorifying God in all that is done).

The strategy is simple – the vision, mission, and values are presented “to and through the coach”. The coaches' hearts, marriages and families are ministered first, so that through the coaches, their colleagues, teams and athletes are ministered. The method used for the application of this strategy has three steps – to engage with individuals, especially at where they are on their spiritual journey; equip them through training,

¹ Fellowship for Christian Athletes, “Vision and Mission,” *FCA*, accessed October 1, 2019, <https://www.fca.org/aboutus/who-we-are/vision-mission>.

events, resources and on-going support; and empower them to use their characteristics, talents, personal faith experiences and the Gospel for their good and the good of others. This method applies first to the first 'disciples' (coaches) so that in turn it could be applied with the other disciples, thus having disciples who make disciples. As previously mentioned, in 2002 the FCA took a clearer vision by defining the Four Cs of its ministry – coaches, camps, campus, and community; with the mission done among the first 'C' being put further into practice through the other 'Cs'.²

2.1.2 - European Christian Sports Union

The European Christian Sports Union, in presenting its three-year plan of 2019-2021, states that the vision is 'Making disciples in all nations for Jesus Christ in the world of sport, fitness and play.'³ They will work towards this vision through the mission of 'Partnering to serve Christ's Kingdom in the world of sport, fitness and play.' This makes it clear – making disciples everywhere by partnering with other organisations. This is done through what the ECSU refers to as the nine 'heart values', which are divided into three categories: 'What is done', 'Where it is done', and 'How it is done'. In all that it does, the ECSU aims to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and obey the Bible (first set of values - What); in and through the Church, in sport, fitness and play, in every country and every city (second set of values – Where); by living as servants, building teams, and working in partnerships (third set of values – How).

Their vision and mission is further enhanced with clear set targets. The vision is set at making disciples in the biggest 618 European cities through the three defined contexts (sport, fitness and games). A defined strategy was launched in 2015, entitled 'ReadySetGO', for 'multipliers' (those ready to help the sports movement grow) to be Ready and empowered to go to new places, being Set through training and resources to work within the different contexts in the best way, in order to GO and make disciples. Malta is one of the countries where the ECSU is present.

² Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Four Cs of Ministry."

³ "European Christian Sports Union: Plan 2019 to 2021," Presentation slides, accessed November 21, 2018.

The aim is not simply for the sports movement to grow, but for it to grow in a faithful way and in a way that would last.

To evaluate this growth, the ECSU has set up a colour coded pie chart divided in two: the upper half showing the actions within the three contexts and how they are growing, or not, in each of the Ready, Set, and GO phases, while the bottom half presents growth in the heart values. If in a particular area no growth is happening, the sector is painted green, while if some growth is taking place it is drawn yellow, and if there is sustained growth it is made green. The vision is for all the pie chart to be green.

The ECSU presents various GO strategies with the aim of helping the sports movement grow. These include prayer gatherings; gatherings to train, partner, encourage and envision the leaders involved; training new leaders; and creating teams to go to different cities. Besides this, a lot of resources are prepared and distributed to multipliers and disciple makers to further play out the mission.

2.1.3 - Church Sports & Recreation Ministries

The Church Sports & Recreation Ministries (CSRM) present the vision ‘to equip local churches to change lives through Sport, Recreation and Fitness Outreach Ministries’ by focusing on what they call the ‘4C’ strategy.⁴ Their mission is to ‘train, equip and resource local church staff and volunteers, mobilizing them to build bridges in their communities using sport, recreation and leisure activities for the purpose of leading people into a transforming personal relationship with Christ.’

The ‘4C’ strategy looks at organising Conferences (gatherings for the various churches involved), Consultation (which aims to help churches equip themselves through strategy, staff, and programmes towards accomplishing their mission), Certification (structured courses which help ministries in their professional image and commitment, in recognition. and knowledge expansion), and help in the Connections with other churches and ministries, resources, partners, and training opportunities through the gatherings, podcasts and social media, thus aimed at creating a sports network. The

⁴ Church Sports & Recreation Ministries, “Our Strategy,” *The Association of Church Sports & Recreation Ministries*, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://www.csr.org/services.html>.

CSRSM holds seven commitments: to go to all, prioritising ministry in the family first, having personal integrity, prayer, an outreach of prayer and help to those in need, keeping an eye out and praying for people who can help in the ministry and valuing both the people and programme vital to the ministry.

2.1.4 - Sports Outreach

Sports Outreach was founded on December 7th 1988 by Russ and Sue Carr, with the aim of restoring hope and transforming lives. Their mission is to “recruit, train, equip and deploy committed Christian leaders in the effective use of sports ministry for the purpose of sharing the Gospel and to alleviate human suffering.”⁵ This organisation presents this Sports Ministry model:

In the mission fields, our staff initially step on the field with community members providing sports TRAINING, sharing the TRUTH of the Gospel, and building TRUSTING relationships. As relationships develop, our staff step off the field to go DEEPER into lives through mentoring, to meet emotional, practical and spiritual needs through DISCIPLESHIP, and to equip people for the purpose of DEPLOYING the next generation of servant leaders.⁶

Sports Outreach strives to keep their strategies practical, sustainable and burden lifting, and have these four core values which keep them right on their mission: honouring God in all that they do, develop people spiritually and physically, be good stewards of all things which are loaned to us by God to help those in need, and pursue excellence to reflect God’s good creation. They focus on discipleship, teaching, empowerment and training, helping also in providing clean water and healthy food, while also growing healthy church communities.

⁵ Sports Outreach, “Our Story,” *Sports Outreach*, accessed July 17, 2019, <http://www.sportsoutreach.net/our-story/>.

⁶ Sports Outreach, “Sports Ministry Model,” *Sports Outreach*, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.sportsoutreach.net/sports-ministry-model/>.

2.1.5 - Christ Care Ministry

Christ Care Ministry, which works mainly in Kenya and has its own sports ministry, focuses on ‘building Christ-centered relationships, discipleship/evangelism, and training believers in the discovery and development of their gifts, talents and vision for the enhancement of their communities and the advancing of the Kingdom of God.’⁷

2.1.6 - World Sports Ministries

Established in 1999, World Sports Ministries (WSM) aims “to inspire people and churches to engage in sports outreach to reach all people from all nations” and equip churches and individuals to use sports as a tool in presenting Jesus in a relevant way.⁸ WSM is of the belief that “sport has the power to transform communities, bring hope and restoration, inspire others and provide a platform to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” In view of this, WSM envisions “To live in a world where people find Jesus Christ in and through sport in their community.” Their mission “is to help provide training, resources and support to help others start sport outreach activities to impact their community, to help carry out the great commission ‘to make disciples in all nations’ [Matthew 28:19].”

The strategy which WSM applies is the same Christ applied, that of forming a group of believers, disciples, in order to be sent to spread the Gospel. By forming Community Sports Teams (CST), they would ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the ministry with the purpose of impacting people of all ages, help people develop their talents, character and values, help people stay fit and healthy, help unite and serve local churches, welcoming people into the local church, and partnering with others in the community. All this is mainly done through sports tournaments, camps and leadership trainings, school events, social events and games, and doing outreach by going where youths meet; joining in their games and leisure time.

⁷ Christ Care Ministries International, “Sports Ministry,” *christcarekenya*, accessed July 22, 2019, <http://www.christcarekenya.org/sportsministry/>.

⁸ World Sports Ministries, “About,” *worldsportsministries*, accessed July 20, 2019, <http://worldsportministries.com/about/>.

2.1.7 - Push The Rock

Push The Rock is another sports ministry organisation whose vision is “To be a global leader in sports ministry, impacting the world for Jesus Christ... one life at a time!” with the mission statement reading: “As a global sports ministry, we proclaim the life-changing message of Jesus Christ through the pursuit of excellence in sportsmanship and athletics.”⁹ Based on scriptural texts, Push The Rock hold as core values the commitment to stand firm in the faith, holding Christ and his teachings at the centre of each programme, with their sights on the spiritual growth towards the building of the Kingdom of God. There is focus both on individuals and families, taking an innovative attitude to all these aspects.

2.2 Sports Ministry development in the Catholic Church

The Jubilee Year of 2000, as previously mentioned, brought a change in the outlook of the Catholic Church towards sport and spurred Pope St. John Paul II to lead the Church in engaging more directly with the world of sport and introduce sports ministry in her global mission.

2.2.1 - The ‘Church and Sport’ section under the Pontifical Council for the Laity

“The Church, which has always manifested interest in important aspects of human coexistence, without doubt must also look at sports, which is the field for new evangelisation.”¹⁰ Presenting the new section for sports, ‘Church and sport’, falling under the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 2004, Pope John Paul II stated this phrase; giving a clear vision of the important role sports must play in the Church’s life. St. John

⁹ Push The Rock, “Mission & Values,” *pushtherock*, accessed June 22, 2019, <https://pushtherock.org/who-we-are/mission-values/>.

¹⁰ Coll. Angelika Metzger, “Giovanni Paolo II sullo sport,” *fjp2*, accessed January 16, 2019, <https://fjp2.com/notizie/mondo/2079-john-paul-ii-about-sports>.

Paul II had stated that the Church must “be in the front ranks in this [sport] area.”¹¹ This brought a shift in the way the Catholic Church related to sports and the sporting world. This showed an opening so that even at an institutional level, the Catholic Church could develop a set-up in which sports ministries could flourish.

Until this point, apart from certain individual initiatives or Church educational programmes, sports did not feature a lot in the mission of the Catholic Church. In fact, in 2005 only about a dozen of all the Bishops’ Conferences in the world (which amount to more than a hundred) had an office dedicated to Church and sport.¹²

Many times sport was simply used in order to attract people. An interesting account is the case of the foundation of the A.C. San Lorenzo de Almargo, Pope Francis’ favourite football club. Fr Lorenzo Massa, a Salesian priest who created a space for children to play football in, had opened the oratory doors for the children on one condition: that they had to come to Mass on Sunday.¹³ Sports was the carrot, and a spiritual experience was the catch. Many times sports and play were only seen as the carrot which brought people to Church activities. This new section was the beginning which brought change to this view within the Church.

In his speech, St. John Paul II expressed his hope for this section to serve for the promotion of sports as an essential element in human development, both on a personal and global level, towards peace and fraternity.¹⁴

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, “Speech to participants of the Convention on ‘Sport, Faith and Ethics’ of the Italian Episcopal Conference,” November 25, 1989 quoted in Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Sport: An educational and pastoral challenge*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), 32.

¹² Pontifical Council for the Laity, *The World of Sport Today: A field of Christian mission*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), 86.

¹³ Club Atletico San Lorenzo de Almargo, “Historia,” *sanlorenzo*, accessed August 22, 2019, <https://sanlorenzo.com.ar/club/historia>.

¹⁴ Metzger, “Giovanni Paolo II sullo sport.”

These were the aims identified for this section:

- “1) to be a point of reference in the Church for national and international sports organisations;
- 2) to sensitise the local churches to the importance of the pastoral ministry of sports environments, while encouraging cooperation between Catholic sports associations;
- 3) to foster a sports culture, as a means of bringing about the holistic growth of the person at the service of peace and brotherhood between peoples;
- 4) to promote the study of specific issues relating to sport, particularly from the ethical point of view; and
- 5) to organise and support initiatives that encourage the Christian witness by sportsmen and sportswomen.”¹⁵

2.2.2 - Sport seminars and documents

In the first years of this department, three international seminars were held; with all proceedings being published. The first seminar in 2005 focused on the relationship between sport and evangelisation; presenting positive viewpoints of the relationship between Church and sport throughout the ages. This seminar analysed sport in different contexts and then saw what opportunities are there for the Church to use for her evangelisation; highlighting sport as a good means of education. In his contribution, Edio Costantini (President of the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*) stated that the positive face of sport must be restored, in light of all the challenges and problems sport faces. Businesses’ involvement, the media, violence, and doping were the threats presented in this seminar; threats which risk unclothing sport from its positive values. Rev. Kevin Lixey LC (responsible for the ‘Church and sport’ section), in his analyses of the section’s aims, presented three concrete action plans. He stated that there must be a sports network within the Church to facilitate the section’s mission, that the section must continue

¹⁵ Pontifical Council for the Laity, “Church and Sport,” *vatican.va*, accessed September 17, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/laity_en/uffici/chiesa_en.htm.

studying the Magisterium of the Church's teaching on sport and the needs of the world of sport to define a vision that responds to such needs, and that it must continue gathering information from good sports ministry practices to assist existing and new sports associations. The proceedings were entitled 'The World of Sport Today: A Field of Christian Mission'.¹⁶

The second international seminar, held in 2007, presented proceedings in a document entitled 'Sport: An Educational and Pastoral Challenge'. This seminar focused more on sports as an educational and pastoral challenge, studying also the idea of sport chaplains.¹⁷ Sport's anthropological, ethical and educational importance was highlighted, stating also that the spiritual dimension in sport, just like the corporeal dimension, must be taken care of. Bishop Carlo Mazza called for an integrated pastoral approach which focuses on all aspect in the human being; with the creation of Christian sports clubs being able to help in instilling Christian values in youths. The reality of sports chaplaincy was discussed extensively, with Msgr. Manfred Paas presenting the work of the Catholic Academy in the Diocese of Essen's collaboration with the German Olympic Sports Association in organising discussions on sports values for coaches. This seminar called for the introduction of more sports chaplains, as well as a collaboration for sports chaplains at major sports events; events which involve many athletes and attract many spectators. These events always have sports ministry teams and chaplains who cater for the pastoral care of all involved, but these must be strengthened further. Other sports chaplaincy experiences were also presented in this seminar.

The third seminar, held in 2009, entitled 'Sport, Education, Faith: Towards a New Season for Catholic Sports Associations', built on the educational aspect of sport and the need for all leaders in the field to coach not only technical and tactical parts, but also the values of sport.¹⁸ By calling for trainers to train true champions, both on and off the field of play, and to be true Christian witnesses, this seminar focused on the spiritual formation of both givers and receivers of sports ministry. Here again, the Church

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for the Laity, *The World of Sport Today*.

¹⁷ Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Sport: An educational and pastoral challenge*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008).

¹⁸ Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Sport, Education, Faith: Towards a new season for Catholic Sports Associations*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).

highlights the educational aspect of sport, stating five principle actions which help in the education of individuals: accepting others as they are, orienting, training, accompanying, and giving hope.¹⁹ In sport, the focus should always be the good of the person and not simply the entertainment and success winning brings. In the opening message of this seminar, Benedict XVI emphasised sport's educational value towards the integral development of the person. Calling for true witnesses, the seminar highlighted the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue sport can promote, while also presented good practices in this field.

Since then, this section's work has been directly taken up by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, but the bi-yearly seminars stopped taking place. Recently, a new document on sport was written, affirming the relationship of Church and sport along the years and the importance of sport in education. This document, entitled 'Giving the Best of Yourself: A document about the Christian perspective on sport and the human person', presents both the positive values which sport promotes (the very same title promotes the excellence sport strives for) and the negative aspects which challenge the sporting world.²⁰ The document states clearly that it is not promoting a Christian sport but a Christian vision of sport. The last chapter presents the Church as a key protagonist in the world of sport, referring to the mission of the Church to be an outgoing Church; using Benedict XVI's image of a modern Courtyard of the Gentiles.²¹ Sport is presented as an educational experience, as a means to create a culture of encounter, peace, and inclusion, and as a work of mercy in its work with the marginalised and underprivileged.

The Church must develop her sport pastoral ministry in different areas; first by promoting the role of the family as first teachers, then through parishes, schools and universities, sports clubs (both amateur and professional), and fitness centres, and by using the media and specialised sciences to promote the good aspects of sport. The document also reiterated that good formation should be given to anyone involved in such ministry (sport educators, families, volunteers, priests and those in consecrated life) so that sport could be of good service to humanity. Play, with all its positive aspects,

¹⁹ Ibid., 79-85.

²⁰ Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, "Giving the Best of Yourself."

²¹ Ibid., 32.

should remain the basis of sport since “only by remaining a game will it do good for the body and spirit.”²²

2.2.3 - Catholic Athletes for Christ

Catholic Athletes for Christ (CAC) was formed by Ray McKenna in Virginia with the mission ‘to serve Catholic athletes and share the Gospel of Christ in and through athletics’²³ following the Vatican’s first-ever sports conference in 2005 and Saint John Paul II’s call to evangelise the world of sports. Their goal is:

‘to provide an integrated network of sports oriented clergy and lay people to serve Catholic athletes, coaches, and staff in the practice of their faith and to utilize the unique platform given to them to reach the world for Jesus Christ and His Church.’

Ultimately, the vision is:

‘To develop and promote solid Catholic role models; to work with the Church leadership and Catholic organizations; to minister to Catholic athletes, coaches, and staff; to reverse the moral crisis in sports today; to create a network of Catholic athletes, coaches, and staff; to organize sports conferences, pilgrimages, retreats, and days of reflection.’

The core virtues which guide this ministry are charity, honesty, humility, meekness, moderation, purity, and sportsmanship.²⁴

Interestingly, the CAC have developed what they refer to as Cathletes™, a middle and high school Chapter programme which uses sports terminology and stories interwoven with faith analogies and teachings to teach. The lessons are Sacramentally focused and always start with examples from sports, grabbing the interest and understanding of the athlete before moving on to use Church teaching to enlighten the particular aspect experienced in sport and in life. The approach taken mainly focuses on the dignity of the human person as seen in the created wholeness of the body, mind, and soul. This is what

²² Pope Francis, “Address to members of the sports associations for the 70th Anniversary of the foundation of the CSI (Italian Sports Center)”, June 7, 2014, quoted in Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, “Giving the Best of Yourself.”

²³ Catholic Athletes for Christ, “Mission,” *catholicathletesforchrist*, accessed August 28, 2019, <http://www.catholicathletesforchrist.org/about-cac/backgroundmission/>.

²⁴ Catholic Athletes for Christ, “Core Virtues,” *catholicathletesforchrist*, accessed August 28, 2019, <http://www.catholicathletesforchrist.org/core-virtues/>.

is referred to as 'theology of sports'.²⁵ The CAC uses a similar strategy to that of FCA by having famous athletes promote the faith and be models for others. An interesting point mentioned by Ray McKenna in an interview was that Catholics find it hard to speak about their faith with others and be active and public witnesses, being "timid to share the Good News" and probably "the world's worst salesmen", and so this organisation pushes to instil an attitude of witness in its Cathletes.²⁶ Therefore this programme leads Cathletes to be true Catholics both on the sport field and in daily life, especially through various charity initiatives.

2.2.4 - John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI launched the John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport (JP2F4S) during his visit to Britain. St John Paul II was the inspiration for this foundation through his vision of sport being a way to develop character. The vision of JP2F4S is to have a 'Holistic education of young people through sport'. The mission is 'To support clubs and schools by promoting a values-driven approach to sport and physical education; enhancing the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth of young people for the benefit of all.' Therefore the aim is two-fold: to educate young people through sport, and to develop communities through sport. They also intend to free up sports facilities for the use of the community in order to develop an identity in sports.

Holistic fulfilment of one's potential by acquiring life skills, or virtues, is key to their mission. They clearly state that certain skills "cannot be learned in front of a screen but can be learned through reflecting on sport and physical education."²⁷

²⁵ Catholic Athletes for Christ, "Start a Chapter," *catholicathletesforchrist*, accessed August 28, 2019, <http://www.catholicathletesforchrist.org/start-chapter/>.

²⁶ Salt and Light Media, *WITNESS - Ray McKenna*, online video, 27:36, August 10, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfOwLDoiUP8>.

²⁷ John Paul II Foundation for Sport, "Vision & Mission," *John Paul II Foundation for Sport*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.johnpaul2foundation4sport.org/our-vision-mission>.

In 2017, the JP2F4S had set these strategic objectives:

“Through sport:

1. Enable young people to develop their character by enhancing their motivation and aspirations, and rejecting self-destructive behaviour,
2. Empower schools and clubs to be the best for their young members,
3. Strengthen community cohesion thus reducing the danger of radicalisation,
4. Reduce reoffending rates among young ex-offenders,
5. Convince, and enable, young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS) to find employment for their own good and the benefit of society,
6. Persuade authorities of the educational benefits of sport so as to improve their support and funding.”²⁸

This foundation has developed both preventive and redemptive educational programmes, in that they encourage youths to avoid making mistakes while at the same time help those who have made mistakes to turn “back onto a creative life-track.”²⁹ Through these programmes they also help rehabilitated inmates in both sports coaching skills and a new attitude to life. Being based at St Mary’s University, Twickenham, London, the foundation is also developing coaching programmes at this university for community-based sports clubs while also aiming to enrich the university’s curricula. JP2F4S helps sports clubs to grow in four different settings, each targeted towards a particular aim: schools (physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual education through sport), after-schools (help schools with their Corporate Social Responsibility and thus bringing them closer to the community), community/parish based (invited youths and families to become part of the community), and stand-alone clubs (supporting other

²⁸ John Paul II Foundation for Sport, “Our Objectives,” *John Paul II Foundation for Sport*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.johnpaul2foundation4sport.org/our-objectives>.

²⁹ John Paul II Foundation for Sport, “Our History,” *John Paul II Foundation for Sport*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.johnpaul2foundation4sport.org/our-history>.

clubs).³⁰ The work in schools is emphasised, with documents and materials being designed for Religion and Physical Education classes.³¹

2.2.5 - Vatican Cricket and Athletic teams

In 2013 the Vatican took a new fold when it comes to sport by starting its own cricket team made up of priests and seminarians coming from countries such as India, Pakistan, Australia, England and South Africa. Recently, in 2019, a new athletics team was formed comprising of sixty members who are “soldiers from the Swiss Guard, employees of the Vatican City State, officers from the gendarmerie, the city state’s tiny police force, priests and nuns.”³² Apart from it being a team with sporting purposes, the aim is also “to use sport to promote inter-religious dialogue and understanding.” There have also been two Muslim migrants who have joined the team as honorary members.³³ Monsignor Melchor Jose Sánchez de Toca y Alameda, the team president and the head of the Vatican’s sports department in the culture ministry said that “for now the Vatican was looking to participate in competitions that had cultural or symbolic value.” Later on there might even be a chance for this team to participate in the Olympic Games.³⁴

2.2.6 - Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati and Blessed Chiara ‘Luce’ Badano

A youthful and sports figure within the Catholic Church is Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati. Born in 1901 and dying at 24 years of age, he loved to do various sports, especially mountain climbing, and used to organise sports events. He never held back from sharing passages and thoughts from the Gospel with those who were with him. Blessed Chiara ‘Luce’

³⁰ John Paul II Foundation for Sport, “How we work,” *John Paul II Foundation for Sport*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.johnpaul2foundation4sport.org/how-we-work>.

³¹ John Paul II Foundation for Sport, “Aim high for all,” *John Paul II Foundation for Sport*, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.johnpaul2foundation4sport.org/aim-high-for-all-schools-programme>.

³² Nick Squires, “Nuns (and priests) on the run - Vatican unveils its first athletics club,” *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/01/10/nuns-priests-run-vatican-unveils-first-athletics-club/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The Guardian, “Nuns on the run: Vatican launches athletics team and targets Olympics,” *The Guardian*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/jan/10/vatican-announces-athletics-team-olympics-italian-olympic-committee>.

Badano was also a girl who was full of life, passionate about Christ and sports. She was born in 1971 and died in 1990 with bone cancer.

Inspired by both Frassati and Badano, and following John Paul II's call for a greater involvement in sport by the Church, a new sports ministry for males and females started in 2016 and 2018 respectively. This was at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Denver, USA, and the ministries were named Frassati Sports & Adventure and Badano Sports.

The mission of Frassati Sports & Adventure is

to form strong male disciples of Jesus Christ. Through sports and adventure, we seek to foster authentic masculine spirituality, servant leadership, vocation discernment, and joyful Catholic witness. With God the Son at the center of our every action, He empowers us to take up our cross/sword and do all things through Him³⁵

while that of Badano Sports is 'to form strong female disciples of Jesus Christ. Through sports, we seek to foster authentic feminine spirituality, servant leadership, vocation discernment, and joyful Catholic witness.'³⁶

These ministries include organising sports camps and sessions, competitive teams, and discipleship groups focusing more on Christian values through fellowship, prayer, study, service, sports, and adventure. The Archbishop of Denver, Samuel J. Aquila, states that the journey of life is with many challenges, as is the path to Heaven, and so it is a blessing that such ministries guide children and youths on both journeys.³⁷

2.2.7 - Sport at the Service of Humanity

In October 2016, a conference inspired by Pope Francis was organised at the Vatican and was entitled 'Sport at the Service of Humanity: The First Global Conference on Faith & Sport'. This event was led by Pope Francis, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, and attended by more than four hundred leaders and influencers in the world of faith, sport, business, government,

³⁵ Highlight Catholic Ministries, "Training for heaven: Frassati Sports & Adventure," *highlightcatholic*, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://highlightcatholic.org/frassati>.

³⁶ Highlight Catholic Ministries, "Training for Heaven: Badano Sports," *highlightcatholic*, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://highlightcatholic.org/badano>.

³⁷ Highlight Catholic Ministries. "Frassati Sports & Adventure."

and NGOs. This conference successfully led to a global movement which promotes “Faith & Sport as a platform for good” and a tool for development and peace.³⁸ The foundation took the name of the conference, or SSH in short, and its leadership team is made up persons representing the various fields present at the conference, including Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi.

The vision this foundation holds is of “A global movement that inspires every organization and participant in Sport to live, think and act in accordance with the “Sport at the Service of Humanity Declaration of Principles”. Its mission is then “To be a force for growing the MOVEMENT and laying the groundwork for sustainable impact.”³⁹ This foundation is not about promoting the Catholic faith but about providing “an opportunity to combine the emotion of faith and sport into a powerful force that can make a real difference to our world.”⁴⁰ It is guided by the principles of compassion, respect, love, enlightenment, balance, and joy.⁴¹ These values are promoted through what is known as the Humanity Sports Club – a virtual club which one can join in order to help encourage and be a witness to these values.

2.3 Sport and Ecumensim

An interesting aspect that really comes to the fore in the sport ministry examples presented above, especially through those in Protestant churches, is the ecumenism within the organisations; with directors as well as members in the same organisation being part of different church denominations. We saw this in the first founders of the Fellowship for Christian Athletes, as well as in those developed more recently. This shows the power of sport: the power to gather people and focus on one aim, the power

³⁸ Sport at the Service of Humanity, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://sportforhumanity.com/>.

³⁹ Sport at the Service of Humanity, “Vision,” *sportforhumanity*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://sportforhumanity.com/vision/>.

⁴⁰ Sport at the Service of Humanity, “Story & Inspiration,” *sportforhumanity*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://sportforhumanity.com/story-inspiration/>.

⁴¹ Sport at the Service of Humanity, “Declaration of Principles,” *sportforhumanity*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://sportforhumanity.com/declaration-of-principles/>.

to bring athletes to experience Jesus Christ in their lives. The specific beliefs are irrelevant since the Christian values sport promotes are the same.

This is a lesson for the Church worldwide, that rather than focusing on simply protecting the traditions that exist, one should focus on applying the richness found in the various traditions, learn from each other and apply these towards our spiritual experiences of Christ. The third sport seminar held in 2009 at the Vatican calls for the ecumenical and interreligious aspect of sport to shine within the Catholic setting while promoting the unitive and peaceful characteristics of sport. Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to “never be afraid of encounter, of dialogue, of debate”⁴², because if we only aim to survive and conserve what we have, we end up not being prophetic. If one has a “clear and mature awareness” of his or her “own principles and values”⁴³, one should never fear encountering the other to grow. The Church is called for a continual renewal within culture and society, and so while appreciating her Tradition, must continue looking outward.

2.4 Analysing the presented sports ministries’ vision mission and strategy

Analysing the various ministry models presented above, in light of literature on management and strategy, will lead to a better study of what the sports ministry strategy in Malta should encompass. For this reason we will now look at what a vision, mission and strategy should look like.

⁴² Libreria Editrice Vaticana, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to ‘Roma Tre’ University,” *vatican.va*, February 17, 2017,

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/february/documents/papa-francesco_20170217_universita-romatre.html.

⁴³ Ibid.

2.4.1 - What should a vision, mission and strategy look like?

The vision is a desired future.⁴⁴ Collins and Porras state that the vision “creates meaning and gives identity, belief, guidance and inspiration” and is a “focused target with clear expectations.”⁴⁵ It is important that the vision is communicated well to all who must follow and be inspired by it. The examples of the visions presented follow these criteria in that they are straightforward and clear; while also portraying the desired future of where the organisations strive to be.

Rosen states that the mission provides a framework for the organisation to operate in so that its objectives could be reached. The mission statement should focus on what needs are to be met. He goes on to say that “the mission defines the company’s purpose – its *raison d’être*” and that “it provides a sense of strategic direction”⁴⁶

Strategy, first developed in a military setting and derived from the Greek word meaning ‘generalship’ or ‘command’, is important to give direction and purpose, to use resources effectively and to coordinate individuals’ decisions.⁴⁷

The strategy, which is an overall plan, must be based on what is the most important, on what the organisation is focused on, on the point that the organisation has arrived at, on what has come out of the analysis, on the environment it works in, and on the internal issues that come up.⁴⁸ According to Collis and Rukstad, the various points in a strategy should be: a mission statement that tackles the purpose of an organisation, a statement of principles and values stating the beliefs and behaviour, the vision statement projecting what the organisation wants to be, and the strategy statements define what the game plan will be.⁴⁹

Key aspects that make a strategy successful are having clear goals that are simple, long-term and consistent, having a profound understanding of the operation’s environment,

⁴⁴ Mats Lindgren & Hans Bandhold, *Scenario Planning: The link between future and strategy*, (2nd ed.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22.

⁴⁵ Collins and Porras (1996) quoted in Mats Lindgren & Hans Bandhold, *Scenario Planning*, 82.

⁴⁶ Ronald Rosen, *Strategic Management: an introduction*, (London: Pitman Publishing, 1995), 22-25, 139.

⁴⁷ Robert M. Grant & Judith Jordan, *Foundations of Strategy*, (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2012), 12-13.

⁴⁸ Rosen, *Strategic Management*, 130.

⁴⁹ D.J. Collis and M.G.Rukstad. *Can you say what strategy is?*, Harvard Business Review (April 2008), 63-73, quoted in Robert M. Grant & Judith Jordan, *Foundations of Strategy*, 21.

being able to use strengths in the best way to compensate for weaknesses or threats, and having an effective implementation, which translates in effective leadership, energy in implementing decisions, and fostering loyalty and commitment among all those involved.⁵⁰

There are different models which can be used in strategic planning, and which one is used depends on all the points mentioned.⁵¹ 'Strategic planning' refers to a "deliberate, systematic, formal process of analysing the present and probable future situation of an organisation" in order to decide "what should be done and how it should be done"⁵², and so does not include the actual implementation of the plan nor its management. Strategic planning is the formulation of the strategy, while strategic management refers to the whole process.

2.4.2 - Analysing the sports ministries' vision and mission

We will start by examining the vision and mission statements offered above. Taking the example of the Fellowship for Christian Athletes, the vision is of a 'transformed world' by 'Jesus Christ' 'through coaches and athletes'. They envision a transformation, and so that is the objective. The mission responds by creating the framework for this transformation, defining through whom the world will be transformed – 'leading every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.' The European Christian Sports Union presents the same development – envisioning to make disciples in all nations for Jesus Christ in the world of sport, fitness and play. The objective is making disciples by partnering, and so the mission is of partnering to serve. With whom? With all those present in the world of sport, fitness and play.

The build from vision to mission makes for a "focused target with clear expectations" as stated above by Collins and Porras (1996), thus giving clear directions. This definitely helps all involved in the ministry to work towards the particular aims.

⁵⁰ Robert M. Grant & Judith Jordan, *Foundations of Strategy*, 10-11.

⁵¹ Rosen, *Strategic Management*, 130-136.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 130.

The Church Sports and Recreation Ministries' vision of equipping local churches to change lives through the various ministries is strengthened through the mission focusing on training, equipping and resourcing churches.

The same can be seen through the John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport's vision and mission, where the vision is for a 'holistic education' of the young and the mission responds by aiming to 'support clubs and schools' and 'enhance growth of young people.' The mission always expands on the vision and outlines practical aspects for its realisation. We practically see this same pattern presented in all visions and missions.

On the other hand, it is easy to confuse the vision, mission and goals. The Catholic Athletes for Christ seem to have done just that when presenting a very wide vision which in reality does not list a vision but only the mission, thus defining the purpose of the organisation without stating where it wants to go as an organisation. This makes it hard for the organisation and the people involved in it to see clearly where they want to go, and so one must be careful not to fall in this trap.

2.4.3 - Analysing the sports ministries' strategy

Looking at the strategies presented by the sports ministries we again witness a clear and concise programme. The Fellowship for Christian Athletes has probably the simplest strategy; that everything must start from the coaches so that through the coaches all are reached. So the coaches must be engaged, equipped, and empowered in order to grow and reach others. The vision is reached through the Four Cs (Coaches, Camps, Campus, and Community), thus presenting clearly and concisely the means through which the ministry is performed. The Church Sports and Recreation Ministries too present their '4C' (Conferences, Consultation, Certification, and Connections) strategy in a way that makes it easy to remember what the focus is on; to remember what the strategy entails and easy for those outside the organisation to understand its strategy. The ECSU, through its ReadySetGO strategy, again shows a clear and easy to remember plan of how the vision and mission are to be reached.

What is interesting to see in these different sports ministry models is that each ministry tackles such ministry in a different way, and builds a strategy that depends on that focus.

While the FCA focuses on Christian witness and coaches who are models to those they coach, the ECSU focuses more on increasing its network for more disciple making. Training is key in most models, each looking towards their particular area. Also interesting is the way sports ministries in the Catholic Church developed following St. John Paul II's call for an evangelisation through sport, and the way they were influenced by other denominations' ministries in the way the vision, mission and strategy developed. The wording of these are very similar. We can notice that the person of Jesus Christ and one's experience of him is central in all the mission statements expressed in protestant churches' ministries; now also in Catholic sports ministries' statements. The use of sport in Catholic ministry before focused more on building one's character rather than as a tool for disciple making. St. John Paul II's and the subsequent popes' call for a more openness in the Catholic Church seem to have opened the doors for many ministries to develop and use the models that existed in various ecclesial communities.

On the other hand, we still see that even though this shift did take place, the Catholic Church still focuses on sport as a tool for human development and its role in education. We can see this through the documents presented and the various sports ministries, especially John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport's strategy, that aims to use schools, together with parishes (two traditional areas of ministry within the Catholic Church along the years) as the framework for all its work.

2.5 The situation in Malta

Here we will now present the situation in Malta so that there could be a better understanding of the background in which the new sports ministry strategy is going to be developed. In Malta the relation between sports and the Church took more or less the same route as it did in the rest of the Catholic Church.

2.5.1 - Saint Ġorġ Preca

Saint Ġorġ Preca used to encourage the members of the Society of Christian Doctrine (M.U.S.E.U.M.) to go out for walks in the countryside on Sundays with the youths because this was good recreation and had benefits for them.⁵³ Sport is popular and is played in M.U.S.E.U.M. centres as well as other catechetical or youth centres, prior to or after catechesis classes, but it is rarely used or integrated in the religious and spiritual formation of the youngsters. Again, sport and recreation is simply used as the carrot to bring children and youths to the organisation.

This is also witnessed in Catholic schools where sport is an important part of education, seen for example at the Lasallians' De La Salle College and the Jesuits' St. Aloysius College, but falls short on integrating this with the religious experience. There are initiatives by individuals, but there is no real movement or framework which support these initiatives.

2.5.2 - Salesians and SPYS

The Salesians, through their schools Savio College in Dingli and St. Patrick's in Sliema, are the ones which come closer in using this important pastoral tool. Sports too is very much integrated in their educational programme and is aimed at teaching values in the students. Presence of Salesians during sports and recreation hours at the school goes in line with the pedagogy Don Bosco promoted when he was alive. Furthermore, the Bosco camps organised during summer take the form of sports camps and have sports, formation and prayer session in their programme. The formation sessions involve games and challenges to help bring out the message or lesson that needs to be conveyed. In the oratories at Dingli, Sliema, and Senglea, recreation and sports has the function of instilling values and integration within the youths. During the time spent at the oratory, the youths have a small time of reflection and examples from the sports and recreation

⁵³ Information provided by John Formosa SDC.

time is used in these sessions. In summer, camps are organised which help in supporting and emphasising the aims mentioned.⁵⁴

Various parish youth groups in Malta are also using the same system of games and challenges in their meetings to help in the formation of adolescents and youths.

The Salesians in Malta also have a ministry called SPYS (Salesian Pastoral Youth Service) which helps in forming youths and their leaders within the Salesian network.⁵⁵ Starting in 1995, and run by religious and lay persons, it aims at building persons and the community within a holistic formative programme based on Gospel values, in order to “grow in friendship with the Lord”, “peace with the self” and “reach out in a ministry to others.”⁵⁶ As part of this formation programme, SPYS have developed a weekend seminar entitled *Touching Lives Through Sports*, which aims at promoting the values which derive from sports towards an integration of these values in one’s life. This seminar was offered as a University of Malta study unit, though recently this has been stopped due to a lack of applicants.

2.5.3 - Maltese Catholic Action

In 1950, the Maltese Catholic Action, through the initiative of Fr Philip Calleja and Fr Victor Grech, started to organise weeklong vacations for children who lived in large families from all-over Malta and Gozo. These came to be known as Summer Camps, with a week being organised for boys and another for girls. After some years being organised in Mgarr, Gozo, these camps started to be held in Siggiewi where we today find the *Dar tal-Providenza*, and these camps hosted about a hundred children each week. Apart from the catechesis and teachings on the mass, hikes and outings at the sea were organised. Here again we see how sports and recreation were an important element in Church activity, especially with the young.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ D’Amato, “Making disciples on the field”, 34-36.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 34-36.

⁵⁶ SPYS – Salesian Pastoral Youth Service, “About,” *facebook*, accessed October 10, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/SPYSmalta/about/?ref=page_internal.

⁵⁷ Unpublished account gathered by Mr Paul Saliba on the information provided by Ms. Mary C. Puli.

These Summer Camps, now known as *KampSajf*, are still organised every year by the Youth Catholic Action (ŻAK) and activities still involve a lot of games which lead the youths towards an intended message. This pedagogy is used in the weekly meetings held by ŻAK in the parishes; a way which helps the young to learn and grow through fun and games. Through games, the intended message manages to be conveyed and understood in a way that otherwise would probably have been difficult to comprehend.

2.5.4 - Fr Hilary Tagliaferro OSA and the Educational Sports Centre

Fr Hilary Tagliaferro OSA, a Maltese Augustinian priest synonymous with sports in Malta, was inspired by the *Centro Sportivo Italiano* to develop the Educational Sports Centre (*Ċentru Sportiv Edukattiv*) in 1972.

One of Fr Hilary's first assignments was to take care of children and youths playing football at the Augustinian oratory in Tarxien; a position which led him to become the coach of both the Tarxien Rainbows and Hibernians FC football teams. These roles put him in a unique position as a priest; a position which was very controversial at the time, but one which he wanted to make use of to the maximum by giving Christian values to footballers and helping youths meet Christ through sport.⁵⁸

These experiences made him go deeper. After following a course organised by the CSI and spending two months observing their work in Italy, Fr Hilary wanted to use the Marsa Sports Grounds as a school of sport aimed at training children in the techniques of various sports disciplines while also teaching them the values of sports. Though the sports school did not materialise, the project still took the form of a centre having sessions on Wednesdays and Saturdays, gathering more than five hundred children, mostly boys; practising football, basketball, athletics, and later on tennis. He managed to gather the best Physical Education teachers to develop this programme.

Though the programme did not have religious intentions and was mainly focused on technical development, every two to three weeks the skills sessions would focus on particular values that are seen and lived through sport. There were also meetings with

⁵⁸ Lino Bugeja, "Kultura Pastorali permezz tal-Futbol," in *Fr Hilary Tagliaferro: Bejn Storja u Miti*, ed. Sergio Grech (Malta: Horizons, 2016), 33-34.

parents which highlighted the importance of these values to them, while every two months an educational seminar was held for all the coaches at the Centre; focusing mainly on sports values. The programme year would always start and end with mass.

The Centre lasted for about eight years, before a political decision brought the project to an end, and Fr Hilary then developed the Youth Football Association to regulate all the football nurseries; an association he still leads as president. Sport also paved the way for Fr Hilary to teach sports and values to residents at the San Blas Drug Rehabilitation Centre and hold meetings with their families to help them come to terms with their children's problems.

Through the Youth FA, Fr Hilary stills keeps a good relationship between the Church and the Malta Football Association (MFA).

2.5.5 - Sports Clubs

A number of sports clubs in Malta also developed based on Christian values; clubs coming from Catholic schools such as De La Salle College, the Jesuit college of St Aloysius and Savio AC at the Salesian college of Savio College where the figure of the late Fr Frank Clifton sdb was a presence that was felt in the athletics scene and pushed for Christian values to be ever present within this reality in Malta.

2.5.6 - Kerÿgma Movement

The Dominican run Kerÿgma Movement held a national campaign entitled 'Solidarity Through Sports' between 1986 and 2004 in which a volleyball marathon with the aim of collecting money for charity took place.⁵⁹ This campaign highlighted the values of solidarity, friendship and perseverance and was a witness to all of the benefits sport could do through these values. The fruits of this campaign were also seen through the

⁵⁹ Moviment Kerÿgma, "Our History," *Moviment Kerÿgma*, accessed October 29, 2019, <http://kerygma.org.mt/about-us/our-story/>.

volleyball team that was created bearing the same name and the many volleyball players that emerged; putting Catholic witness into the sports field.

2.5.7 - Maltese Diocesan Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport

The new approach taken towards sport within the Catholic Church, as seen in many new organisations around the globe following the opening of the 'Church and sport' section in 2014, was also taken on board by the Church in Malta, and in 2007 a commission for sport was set up under the name of 'Kummissjoni għall-Ħarsien tal-Valuri fl-Isport' (Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport). Though this is the official name, it is now commonly referred to as 'Kummissjoni Djoċesana Sport' (KDS). The official name reflects the previously discussed point that the Catholic Church many times focused simply on promoting and safeguarding the values in sport.

The Commission was first headed by Fr Hilary Tagliaferro and the late Dr Michael Aquilina and its description found in the Ecclesiastical Directory states that:

The Church, which has at heart the person as a whole and the promotion of values which help strengthen humanity, is also interested in this field [sport] since sports is a way of culture and helps the human being in his journey towards maturity.⁶⁰

The Commission's mission and role also reflect the call of the Diocesan Synod of Malta (1999-2003) to have formation programmes for participants and officials within the sporting world.⁶¹

This Commission has these points as its mission:

- to help the Church in Malta be attentive to the pastoral care within the sports sector;
- to clearly show the Christian values found in sports, especially among children and youth towards their character growth in preparation for life;
- to promote a culture of sport as means to whole personal development and to serve towards peace and unity among the Maltese;

⁶⁰ Archdiocese of Malta and Diocese of Gozo, *Direttorju Ekkleżjastiku: Malta u Għawdex 2018*, May 20, 2018, <http://ms.maltadiocese.org/WEBSITE/DIRETTORJU.pdf>, 46.

⁶¹ Diocese of Malta, *Lajċi Nsara*, Diocesan Synod Documents, 1999-2003, 47.

- to lead studies and seminars on specific sports related topics, mostly on ethics and values of sports;
- to be a reference point within the Church in Malta for sports organisations;
- to encourage collaboration between sports organisations; and
- to work hand in hand with the Pastoral Formation Institute and the various commissions within the Church.⁶²

In the last couple of years, headed by Mr David Azzopardi, the KDS is focusing on promoting sports as a vehicle of Christian values in schools and youth groups, as well as promoting all-ability sports. In fact, the KDS was behind the first Malta Paralympic Committee, recently established. The KDS works closely with the ECSU and in fact its members have attended a number of gatherings and training courses held abroad. These experiences led the KDS to organise a number of seminars to lay the foundations for the introduction of organised sports ministry in Malta.

In schools, the KDS has been working on two main projects. The first one is the Born2Play Schools Sports Initiative in collaboration with the ECSU members present in Malta and Church schools. This is composed of value-integrated sports activities to help the young athletes grow and reach their potential on and off the sports field through workbooks, in-session lessons, reflection and application. Thus this after-school project seeks to aid in sports development as well as development through sport. The plan is for this project to be conducted by Physical Education teachers after having attended a specific course, but though the response from both schools and teachers has been positive, the commitment was a bit lacking and so the project has not yet took off except in one school. On the other hand, the KDS has been facilitating for ECSU members to visit schools and hold sports sessions and summer camps.

The second project, focusing on schools, is the introduction of the Religion through Sport lessons; where sport is used to teach both values as well as teachings from the Bible. This has been introduced in two schools at level year 7 and 8, but the KDS is working on

⁶² Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport, "Statute," 2007.

introducing this in other Church and if possible public schools. This project has been positively received by both children and teachers.

When it comes to youth groups, the KDS held a number of meetings with group leaders to introduce sports ministry as well as gathering information of the interest and use of sports among youth in group meetings and activities. A day seminar was also held with various group leaders to present in a tangible way what sports ministry is all about. Ultimately the aim is for youth groups to develop their own sports ministries both to serve the group and as a means for outreaching.

The KDS, influenced by the ECSU's practice, also held a couple of prayer sessions for Christians in Malta involved in sports; however the commission failed to hold these meetings consistently.

Though the KDS had identified four focus areas, these being sports chaplaincy, all-ability sports, sports ministry, and community sports, these were not sustained and the people invited to help in these areas did not commit to the vision. Thus, it was increasingly being felt that these initiatives must be put in a defined strategy with a clear vision of where the KDS is heading and a definition of the most important aspects to focus on for the realisation of this vision.

Conclusive points

Each ministry has developed in a particular time and context depending on the situation and needs of the intended target environment and addressees. The Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport has been working on developing a proper sports ministry in Malta, and the next chapter will present the study conducted for the formulation of a sports ministry vision and strategy.

Chapter 3: Towards a vision and strategy

Introduction

This chapter will present the methodology of this study and discuss that which has resulted from the previous chapters in light of what has been found through the interviews and focus group; all towards a defined sports ministry vision and strategy in Malta.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 - The research question

The work of this study comes in at the point left at the end of Chapter 2, so that through reflection and analyses and by looking at what is most needed, a strategy for sports ministry could be decided. The aim of this study has been that of historically analysing the relationship between sports and religion, more recently between sports and Christianity, and how the latter has tried to use or disregard the former in its mission in the world. The study has also analysed the development of sports ministry in the last hundred years, mainly in Protestant churches, and how this has become an important ministry area in many churches. Here we have also seen how the Catholic Church is now developing this type of ministry. This has led to the response witnessed in Malta, particularly within the Church in Malta. The focus in this study is the development of sports ministry within the Church in Malta, and a clear vision and strategy which looks at how such a ministry could evolve. Such an evolvment also includes the relationship with other Christian denominations in Malta. Thus this study uses the empirical-critical method: studying the current situation, presenting a vision, and suggesting a strategy (pastoral plan) as the journey towards the achievement of the vision.¹

This section looks at the methodology used in order to research and analyse what should be included in this strategy; a research which, besides the historical analyses and the

¹ Mons. Joseph Galea Curmi, "Importance of method in Pastoral Theology," (lecture, University of Malta, Lecture 4, Week 4, 2018), lecture notes. The empirical-critical method was proposed by Mario Midali.

examples of various sports ministries previously referred to, includes interviews with six individuals involved in sports in Malta as well as a focus group among five of the KDS members. The reason for the inclusion of interviews and a focus group was for this process to gather the experience and views of individuals working within the field of sports and sports ministry in Malta. For this reason, it was good to directly involve the members of the KDS since this commission has the responsibility to oversee the development of sport within the Catholic Church in Malta. This would make the whole study richer, more factual and more relevant.

3.1.2 - The research method: A qualitative approach

This study took a qualitative outlook, with a bibliographical search, an analyses of historical documents, interviews and a focus group. Such an outlook helps in understanding both historical developments as well as the current situation and needs of sport in Malta and the Church's relation to sport in Malta.

A qualitative approach gives space for participants to answer the questions by explaining their viewpoints better as well as go into greater depth. Through the interviews and the focus group, the information, opinions and various aspects referred to could be analysed in depth; making the study richer since these could complement the historical and bibliographical analyses. This leads to a more fruitful study and better tools for the development of the vision and strategy. An approval for both the focus group and interviews was obtained from the University Research and Ethics Committee, while permission to contact the KDS member was requested and granted by the Delegate for the Laity of the Church in Malta.²

² Letters in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

3.1.3 - Individual interviews

Six individual semi-structured interviews with persons involved in sports and formation were held. The aim of these interviews was to gather views and opinions on the effect of sports on individuals as well as the role which the Church could take in the world of sport, together with suggestions regarding the formulation of a sports ministry strategy within the Church in Malta.

The interviewees came from different experiences in sport so that different outlooks could be recorded. The interviewees were chosen based on the researchers' judgement of what is relevant in light of the study. Mainly, the researcher saw that interviews should be made with people who have experience in sport and are familiar to the work of the Church or have been directly involved in the Church. This was important so that respondents could better understand what was asked of them and could better answer in light of these two crucial settings (Church and sport) for the study. Through their background and experience, all respondents could contribute an aspect in what is needed for the setting up of the strategy.

There are both male and female participants. Two interviewees are sports educators, one is a teacher who also volunteers at SPYS, one is a student reading the Physical Education course at the University of Malta, one is a priest very much involved in sports administration in Malta and another is a Christian sports minister working in Malta.

3.1.4 - Individual interview questions

The individual interviews focused on: the effect sport has on individuals, so that such an effect could be in some way measured and seen in light of the growth, or not, of an individual; the role of the Church in Malta within the world of sports, so that an analysis could be made of where the Church could contribute; and on what should be included in a sports strategy for the Church, so that the Church could actually build a strategy in order to be more effective in the world of sports.³

³ Interview questions found in Appendix 3.

3.1.5 - The focus group

A two-hour focus group with five of the KDS members was conducted; these being Mr David Azzopardi, Mr Julian Xuereb, Sr. Rachel Camilleri, Sr Claudia Pace, Ms Lisa Pace. The first part of the focus group proceeded with a worksheet and three questions being presented to the participants. The worksheet included an explanation of the various aspects of vision and strategy formulation, as well as various examples of sports ministries. The questions given were answered individually in written format. After forty-five minutes, the members then gathered together to discuss the current work of the KDS and the priorities which need to be focused on, in light of the current projects of the KDS and that which was reflected and answered individually. The researcher then gathered all the answers as well as that discussed altogether to analyse and produce the results, which would help lead to a defined vision and strategy.

3.1.6 - Focus group questions

Three main questions were asked: one focusing on the current situation and the Church in Malta's involvement in sport as well as the position which the KDS finds itself in as regards to its work; the second focuses on analysing the KDS as a commission, how the group works and its strengths and weaknesses; and thirdly looking at planning the way forward – the desired outcomes, the opportunities that exist, what the mission should be, what areas should be prioritised, what values should be promoted, what resources are need, what organisational structure should there be, and what evaluation should take place.⁴

The questions were formulated based on the literature's accounts of what needs to be considered before creating a strategy. Referring back to what Rosen stated, planning consists of the "deliberate, systematic, formal process of analysing the present and probable future situation of an organisation" in order to decide "what should be done and how it should be done."⁵ The questions asked and the discussion that followed were

⁴ Focus group questions in Appendix 4.

⁵ Rosen, *Strategic Management*, 130.

done in the context of what the KDS has already been doing because according to Henry Mintzberg, intended strategy (the rational design of a strategy) is a poor way of making strategy and its implementation rarely exceeds 30%. On the other hand, emergent strategy (coming from decisions taken on the ground and responding to the changes that occur), is what truly makes the most of the realised strategy (that which is actually implemented).⁶ So the questions asked pointed towards answers given in light of experience of what is already taking place.

Also, the questions reflect what is deemed to be relevant to the study, while also help in the reflection and evaluation done by the members; facilitating their thoughts on what should be done in the future. The questions were open-ended, so that each member could feel free to answer and go in as much depth as was needed.

3.1.7 - Focus group and interviews analyses

The data gathered, both from the interviews and the focus group, is analysed according to the question, so that the current situation in Malta, the role of the Church, and what could be included in the strategy are analysed in light of all the responses. This is how the analyses and results are being presented here. Moreover, the interviews' answers have been broken down into themes according to each question, so that the analyses could be done better and a better flow of the results is presented.

3.1.8 - Privacy and confidentiality

The researcher guarantees privacy and confidentiality to all respondents, especially as regards the direct quotes presented in this study. All respondents were given an information letter explaining what the study is for and how the information provided would be handled.⁷ Though the letter of information stated that the interviews would

⁶ Robert M. Grant & Judith Jordan, *Foundations of Strategy*, 23.

⁷ Letter of Information for Interviews and Focus group in Appendix 5 and 6 respectively.

not be audio-recorded, as intended by the researcher, all interviewees suggested the use of such method and gave permission for it.

3.2 Presentation and discussion of results

The data gathered is here presented and analysed, starting with the individual interviews and then proceeding with the data from the focus group.

3.2.1 - Individual Interviews

The four questions asked to the six interviewees are here discussed.

3.2.1.1 - Effect of sports

The first question asked to the six respondents was about the effect sport has had in their lives and the lives of others. Respondents commented on the personal, social as well as value and spiritual benefits.

Personal benefits

While only one respondent mentioned the healthy lifestyle sports promotes, all other respondents mentioned the positive effects on one's character. Answers included the development of one's character and identity, the self-belief, maturity, and respect one grows in, as well as the power of the human spirit, together with the achievement and capabilities that are seen in self and others. While sport helps in excelling talents, it also helps persons to grow in the humility to accept one's limitations. One respondent (Resp.4) recounted how at times he witnesses "teammates, who are literally down in the dumps outside of the field, but once they step inside the pitch, they are a totally different person, ready to forget their sorrows and enjoy life for an hour or so." This illustrates the power of sport.

On the other hand, one respondent (Resp.1) portrayed also the negative aspect of sport when not lived in the right way, stating that sometimes athletes “destroy their health for the sake of achieving success ... lose their self-esteem as a result of failure in sport ... learn to use any means for the sake of winning.” These are definitely realities which need to be addressed.

Social benefits

An important benefit is the role others come to play in one’s life. The friendships created and the reaching out to others, and the feedback and support one gets, through a coach’s encouraging words for example, leave a positive mark on an individual. Sport also teaches one to work and share with others; teaches one to value others. The sacrifices made for the sake of the team are an important witness of teamwork. Behaviour based on sports values may help someone else to take up and embrace such values.

3.2.1.2 - Values and Spiritual benefits

Apart from the personal and social benefits, in the second question the interviewees were asked about the spiritual benefits of sports. Most of the respondents said that the spiritual aspect in sport is not really presented, with Respondent 4 stating that “unfortunately, throughout my sporting career, I was always taught that Religion and sport are not things which are to be mixed” while Respondent 2 said that “growing up I never had coaches who showed me these values; it was isolated from other domains and coaches focused on technical and physical domains” though “now there are more coaches who show these values, but are only presented to the young.”

At the same time, values are so embedded in sport with the “level of interdependence is outstanding” (Resp.4), that one could easily say that both sport and spiritual experiences are of a positive benefit to the individual. The respondents listed many values that are present in sports, with values that help the individual grow and also grow towards others; but the value of respect towards self, others and the rules of the games was mentioned by most of the respondents. Another important aspect mentioned was

that all the values are seen through teamwork and team-spirit. The spiritual effect might not be evident but can be “observed in others during training and games” (Resp.4). The Church and sport also have similarities in that both promote a sense of belonging and respect to others in the community (Resp.6). Being a priest, Respondent 5 also stated that he felt the call to be a priest in order to use sport and bring people closer to God; connecting both the sport and spiritual realities. He said that he “started realising that the Gospel values and the sports values are the same”; something which, he stated, both Pierre de Coubertin (father of the modern Olympics) and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) also realised and thus founded their activities upon.

These answers could help put light on the importance sport can play in one’s life and so stress the need for these to be addressed better through a strategic set-up.

3.2.1.3 - The role of the Church

The interviewees were then asked about what role, if any, should the Church have in the world of sports. All respondents agreed that the Church does have a role to some degree, with Respondent 4 expressing that the Church looks after the well-being of all, and so also of athletes; teaching them how they can link their sport with their lives. There is also the unifying aspect of sport which is also a fundamental characteristic of the Church, and so sport could act as a platform for the Church to proclaim her message and evangelise; thus helping people grow holistically in body, mind and spirit. This answer reminds us of Golub’s interpretation of both the Church and sport participating in the unitive and collective aspect of God. Respondent 3, who is a sports minister working in Malta, stated that ministry in the Church is about evangelisation, disciple making and *diakonia*, and so sport gives the necessary framework for all this to take place in proclaiming Christ’s message; bringing people closer to God and serving them in their daily lives. He continued by saying that the Church has been given a culture mandate to ‘go and cultivate the world’⁸ and therefore prepare the soil and sow wherever possible; in this case, in the hearts of people who love and respond to sport.

⁸ “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”(Gen 1:28).

On the other hand, respondents drew warnings to the Church, with Respondent 2 saying that the “Church should not make sports her rival, because it will lose”, reminding us of the historical examples presented in Chapter 1 where the Church had to learn to adapt to sport’s popularity, and Respondent 6 saying that the Church must be “careful not to interfere too much due to the diverse groups we have in society today.” She goes on to say that “the message has to be clear that the Catholic Church is not imposing its philosophy and values, but it shows the relevance and the similarities that our faith has with the world of sports.” Respondent 1 stated that the Church should not limit and enclose itself but be open to dialogue.

An interesting question presented by Respondent 3 and which should be asked by the Church is ‘is Malta a Christian country?’ The question is on whether the Church is still influencing the Maltese society today. An answer to this would need to be reflected in the way the Church responds to the current situation in Malta and in the development of the strategy.

3.2.1.4 - Sport Strategy

The final question focused on what elements to include in a sports strategy for the Church. Answers suggest three main areas on which the strategy should focus – training, holistic growth, and reaching out; with respondents also listing a number of practical areas where the strategy could be applied.

Training

All respondents emphasised the importance of adequate training to those who are involved in sport in order for it to become more value-oriented and integrated with its spiritual aspects. Training should be provided for coaches, with sessions included in their courses and practical examples given so that coaches learn to integrate values in their pedagogy (Resp.2). There should also be training for Physical Education teachers, especially in Church schools (Resp.6), for priests during their formation years (Resp.4), and for lay persons to act as sports ministers (Resp.1). Respondent 3 stated that to have a good sports ministry set-up there first must be a gathering (for networking and

training) so then there could be a scattering (trainers sent to train). In a sports club setting, training or formative sessions should be provided to all direct stakeholders, that is, the players (children, youth, and adults), coaches, administrators, and parents (Resp.5). Training should focus on different aspects because each person/athlete is not the same and so one must know how to adapt according to the needs (Resp.4). Respondent 5 also stated that coaches should be chosen based not only on their good technical and tactical abilities, but more so on the values they hold and promote.

Holistic Growth

Training should point towards a holistic growth, not only of the trainees but also of the trainers themselves. The Church should not only focus on teaching doctrine (Resp.1), but should look at sport as a means of new Evangelisation and “to elicit meanings and ways of life, so as to make people see more concretely what the Church teaches” (Resp.4). This would help the Church apply values to real life, and not just show them superficially. The Church should help all those involved in sport to analyse what they go through in their sport and life and learn by doing continual reflection. People should be oriented to apply sport values to life, and for this reason there must be value-laden coaches who themselves would have gone through this process in order to help others do this process (Resp.2). This respondent said that coaches or teachers who are not aware of the values that could be lived through sports or who do not notice how a student or athlete is living or not the values in sport, would in truth be giving a disservice to the pupil.

A struggle and challenge that was mentioned by more than one respondent is that sport values are emphasised only to the young, with older athletes focusing more on technical and tactical aspects. This leads to such athletes losing the true values of sport, resulting in a lack of good and positive examples to the young. This point shows that the application of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes’ strategy of using athletes as role models is difficult. Still, it can be a model which the strategy could strive towards.

Reaching Out

The final important aspect is the outreach that sport is able to facilitate. Respondent 1 said that through sport the Church must focus on reaching out “to children and young

people outside established structures” and that a strategy should include “lay and religious people from different faiths and of no faith.” Respondent 4 stated that sport is a good way for the Church to reach out to athletes and sports people in a way they understand, and so according to Respondent 2 the effectiveness that the strategy could have depends on how appealing this concept could be made to as many people as possible. In line with this, Respondent 2 continued by saying that it is important for the strategy to have a simple model so that it could easily be understood and applied, reflecting the literature presented earlier. Respondent 3 pointed out that in a strategy there is the development, the participation of people and also the overall and practical performance. This is the key to all and so a strategy must point to have a solid performance, which depends on how the build-up is made and how the persons involved have been prepared.

Respondent 5 stated that in Malta, the Church must make the most of the smallness of the country and so the close network that exists could be developed even more. He stated that the Church already has a good relationship with the Malta Football Association (MFA) and the Youth FA, as well as with other sports clubs. Add this to the fact that there is a presence of the Church all around the islands of Malta and Gozo and all that makes for a good opportunity and strategic position for the Church. Apart from this, Respondents 5 and 6 also said that there must be a sharing of personal experiences and good practices, so that young athletes can learn from older athletes and organisations can learn from each other.

The respondents gave some practical suggestions on the tools the strategy could focus on and through which the strategy could be applied. An essential aspect is the formation of a sports ministry team who is trained well and given a defined mission. Sports ministry could be applied through the local parishes and sports communities, while also by visiting schools. Training courses, as already mentioned, are very important, and could also include teaching on how to organise workshops with children, as well as identify what topics to tackle with parents, coaches and administrators in meetings. Respondent 5 also suggested the development of booklets which help explain what is expected from each of these stakeholders according to one’s role. There was also a suggestion to apply the ‘Religion through Sports’ school sessions to sports clubs. Respondent 3 pointed to

sports camps and gatherings which could facilitate networking. After a while, research and evaluation on what is working or not could also take place. Ultimately, as Respondent 5 pointed out, presence is crucial; sports ministers, whether lay, religious, or clerics, must focus on being present in all these different areas.

3.2.2 KDS Focus Group results

I will now present the three points analysed and discussed within the focus group.

3.2.2.1 - Current situation in Malta

All of the responses pointed out that there exist various individual sports initiatives within the Church context, with both Member 2 and Member 5 highlighting the Church schools' good sports facilities reflecting the huge investments and importance it is given, the MUSEUM's use of sports along the years, and the centrality of sport within the Salesian mission. At the same time, three of the respondents stated that there is a need for a network to be established because "fragmentation ... seems to be very heightened in this pastoral area" (Member 4). It was stated that the role of the KDS is to create this link, but there seems to be a lack of support, especially from schools (Member 1), and an inclination to "work independently to avoid complication and ensure operational control and smooth effective intervention" (Member 4). Member 3 said that people in Malta seem reluctant to link together, while also remarking that the KDS' plans could be rejected since it is an official commission representing the Church in Malta and so organisations would be afraid that their project could be taken up by the 'institution'.

For this reason those organisations and individuals who make use or serve through sport and could contribute in this ministry should be clearly identified and united, and so a proper structure to facilitate this is needed. The challenge in this would be to create a workable strategy that is owned and followed by all. Member 4 stated that there is still a lack of knowledge within the Church in Malta of what sports ministry is all about and of what is happening both locally and beyond.

The current situation in Malta also portrays a lack of a healthy sport culture (Member 4), making the need for sports ministry within parishes, as well as within sports clubs and national teams, urgent “to introduce the idea that not only is it important to take care of the mental and the physical but also of the spirit” (Member 1).

3.2.2.2 - Analyses of the current situation

When analysing the current situation of the KDS and what role it should play in the situation illustrated above, a positive note was that members of the commission felt that the rest of the Commission members were dedicated and enthusiastic for this mission and are present to provide sessions and tools to those who ask. Through the various sessions and activities the KDS members involve themselves in, they aim to inspire other individuals to join this ministry and explore what could be done in schools, youth groups and other areas.

In fact, Member 4 stated that the

“KDS has moved away from being a commission that informs the public about its existence and the promotion of sports as a healthy and value-laden practice, to one that seeks to engage like-minded organisations and seeks to encourage intentional interventions especially in the integration of Christian values/catechism [teaching] into sports activity”,

continuing by stating that the commission has become proficient in engaging with local and organisations abroad. On the other hand and in contrast to this view, Member 1 stated that the KDS is still in a state where it “should make ourselves known more” while Member 5 pointed out that “few youths have been involved and are being engaged.” In light of this, Member 2 expressed the fact that children, youths, and adults all show a “thirst for knowledge and a deeper spiritual life, even if they are not all aware of it”, and so this makes for a very good opportunity to implement a sports ministry because sport could be an excellent way to “quench that thirst” and come to “belong to a community of like-minded people.” Member 4 stated that the need and encouragement of sport worldwide is a window of opportunity to outreach “to all people especially those who no longer see the Church as important in their life.”

Together with the members' enthusiasm and the interest shown by others, the highlighted strengths were that there is the full backing of the Maltese Archdiocese, that there are already material and financial resources available and others which could be tapped into, and that the link and relationship with sports ministries abroad offer a good framework for the Commission to work in. An aspect which members did not really agree on is human resources, with some stating that there are and others saying that this is lacking. The interpretation of this could be that while some see that the current number of people involved is small, others point to the interest expressed and so to people who could become involved. In view of this, Member 4 stated that the Church needs to truly invest in parishes and schools to have youths and adults trained as sports ministers and integrated into the pastoral work in the respective areas.

Contrastingly, the lack of full-time commitment of the members of the Commission was seen as the biggest weakness, with Member 2 stating that members are involved in too many things going on to say that the Commission needs to focus since "juggling many things at one go could be tricky." Member 5 mentioned that keeping the momentum going is challenging because of the time available, and so a strategy should reflect the limitations of time and resources. Another weakness is that the KDS has limited its communication with those who have expressed interest in the ministry to emails and invites for particular activities, and so there is a need for a better way of keeping frequent contact. Member 5 has stated that the KDS is at a "standstill in trying to make a breakthrough in the creation of sports ministry in Malta." This lack of communication as well as the fact that the people interested in the ministry seem reluctant to commit to the cause has been a threat to the development of such ministry, and so it is a challenge that must be overcome. Finding the right people with love for God and sport is always challenging.

In light of this, the need for the development of a stronger and a more structured network is expressed by all the members. This could help support and organise the organisations responsible of that which is already taking place (Member 1); it would organise and make the most of the resources that exist (Member 2); and it would create a space for people interested in the ministry to join (Member 5). This is already happening through the various activities and meetings held, but the development of a

strategy could ease all this as well as define a clear vision and the roles within the commission to facilitate its implementation. Through this a real sports community could be created; bringing motivation and a better understanding of the importance of sports ministry.

A good opportunity which the KDS is developing is a sports ministry course together with the Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI) that will serve as professional training and pave the way for sports ministers.

3.2.2.3 - Planning a strategy

The third stage of the process looked at the planning needed for the setting-up of the strategy. From the answers provided one could see that there is enthusiasm and a lot on which the members want to focus on, and so a clear vision was not easy to define, but through looking at all the answers as well as analysing the individual interview responses and the sports ministries' examples, priorities could be made.

The vision proposed by Member 1 is of having professional sports ministers who are sent in every area of society to bring people together and evangelise through sport; of creating a better network; and of having more support from the authorities (government, the Church in Malta, schools, and so on). Member 2 envisions the KDS becoming the 'go-to' organisation for sports ministry 'start-ups' and providing a good-level sports ministry course while also sustaining sports ministry groups and activities for their survival and growth.

Member 3 pointed out to the importance of reaching out and encouraging those who see sport as a tool to pass on Christian values, while emphasising the work in clubs and schools. Member 4 listed a number of visions, from recognising the benefits of sport and play, preserving the true nature of sport as part of God's creation, evangelising through sport, and for the KDS to be a platform to promote sports ministry in all areas of sport.

"To increase the awareness but also to move into deeper engagement by creating formalized training" is what Member 5 envisions. This member also envisions the creation of a Malta Christian Sports Union, which would create a network between the

Christian sports ministries in Malta, similar to what the European Christian Sports Union does in Europe.

Thus the KDS members envision the Commission becoming a platform for sports ministries and having a network among sports persons and organisations, having professionally trained sports ministers who are sent to evangelise in all sports areas, and for there to be a growth within the Maltese society in the awareness and support of sports ministry.

This is further highlighted through the main priorities listed by the members, these being professionalism, communicating, and the active engagement of potential missionaries. Though there is no boundary that limits where the Church can promote her values through sport, the members stated that the focus should be on the Church groups, Church schools, persons with disabilities, those marginalised in society, and sports clubs. The involvement of already existing Church groups and sports institutions is essential and would facilitate and be of great benefit to the sports ministry.

Moving on to what the mission should be, most of the points presented above were mentioned, while it was also said that the mission statement should be consistently clarified and that the objectives should then be put into tasks; with regular meetings to make sure that the mission is kept. One member referred to the current KDS mission statements, that is: showing Christian sports values clearly and to promote sports for character building (1.2), to promote a sports culture as a way for holistic development and as service for peace and fraternity (1.3), to be a reference point for sports organisations in the local Church (1.5), to organise courses (1.8) and the inclusion of all people. This member (Member 2) summed this up in this mission statement:

‘to develop, promote and sustain sports ministry among all generations as means to quench thirst for a healthy spiritual life and a passion for sports, by creating an environment where Christian values meet the beauty of sport to develop the person holistically.’

The group suggested that it is best to focus on a two-year strategy since some of the priorities are already being tackled, so that after two years the KDS could move on to see what is needed then. Besides the frequent evaluations of the events that happen

during the meetings, a thorough evaluation was suggested to take place at the end of these two years.

3.3 Defining a vision, mission and strategy

Summing up all that has been said in the presentation of results, what is clear is that the strategy must work to show the relationship between sport and its spiritual and value aspects, thus all those involved in sport should be trained towards such understanding. A Church that looks at the well-being of people, at unity, at disciple making, evangelising and serving; a Church that must look to dialogue with all in the world of sport to show all the benefits of sport while also showing how one should face the challenges and negative facets that at times appear in sport.

The strategy must look at gathering and setting up a network among sports people in Malta; making use of the existing good practices and opportunities while maintaining a better contact with the various stakeholders. The vision, mission and strategy must keep the KDS focused on its work, and for this reason, apart from building the necessary network, the focus of the work for these two years should be on parishes, Church groups and Church schools. The strategy must ultimately look at creating the necessary support for sports ministries to develop towards helping sports people, and all who come in touch with such ministry, to make an experience of God.

Looking at the examples of all sports ministry models presented, in light of that which was said above, this strategy must use the model presented by most sports ministries in building a strong network among all in the field of sport, taking mainly the model presented by the European Christian Sports Union in engaging and growing in different areas and communities. The network should also include engaging with the programme and resources applied by the John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport schools. The visibility and promotion of what is done is an essential aspect, and this is emphasised by many sports ministries, especially the Fellowship for Christian Athletes and the Athletes in Action. Training is another key aspect, essential for a professional growth of sports ministry. Using mainly the *Centro Sportivo Italiano* model, but also referring to and using the

contacts with other sports ministries, the strategy must develop a professional course as training for new sports ministers.

There are important aspects which will not be included in this strategy, aspects which, though important, might hinder the focus needed for the strategy to work and which the current set-up and resources in the Church in Malta cannot support. These will be discussed in the recommendations below.

Here presented is the two-year strategy for the years 2020-2022, including the vision and mission. For the strategy to be clearer and concise, three areas were chosen which would incorporate the priorities which need to be worked upon. These are Engagement, Communication, and Professionality. In line with other strategies, such as the '4C' of the Church Sport and Recreation Ministry, the 'Four Cs' of the Fellowship for Christian Athletes and the ReadySetGO presented by the European Christian Sports Union, these areas will be referred to by the acronym 'ECP', making them easier to remember and be referred to.

Strategy 2020-2022

Vision

To have a network of professional sports people who base their life on Christ and develop sports ministries in all parishes, Church schools, and Church groups in Malta.

Mission

To develop, promote and sustain sports ministry among all generations by creating an environment where Christian values meet the beauty of sport to develop the person holistically towards a growing relationship with God.

ECP Strategy

Engagement

Engage with all stakeholders within the world of sport in Malta, both within the Church and outside of it, to build a network of sports people who can contribute to as well as gain from the values of sport.

Engage with individuals, school members, parishes/youth groups, sports clubs (parents, athletes, coaches and administrators), the media, Catholic Church organisations and other church denominations.

Organise both social events and prayer sessions.

Create a network

Communication

The KDS must become more visible to promote its vision, mission and work.

The KDS must look to promote its work within the Catholic Church.

The KDS must focus on using social media to share its message and

- Be more visible and promote its events better,
- Present material on its social media more frequently,
- Keep better contact with its followers.

Grow in visibility

Professionalism

Being professional is key for the sports ministry to grow and spread all over Malta and in all possible areas.

KDS members need to keep on forming themselves, attending courses

Creating a course with PFI to have trained sports ministers for its mission.

Have 10 trained sports ministers

Conclusion

This study has been a personal journey of discovery of all the different realities and interactions between religion and sport. It has been a walk through history of how sport and religion have helped each other grow. It has been a journey looking at how sport and religion have been of service to humanity to bring out the best in humans' lives, communities, and societies. It has been an experience seeing how religion, which directly connects humans to God, and sport, which helps humans express the characteristics God bestowed on them, can always be at service to each other.

The study has shown that throughout history, Christianity had a sort of love-hate relationship with sport; at times opposing it because of its negative and worldly connotations, while at others seeing its popularity and therefore as an opportunity to be used. Theologians have also highlighted positive aspects in sport which contribute to humanity. The different and conflicting views on sport continued throughout history. Still, this to and fro struggle resulted in a fruitful one since it led to the purification of sport towards a positive secularisation of sport. In time, the Catholic Church and different ecclesial communities came to see and understand the power of sport and decided to make the best of it for the benefit of those they were responsible for. This is how sports ministries came to be; each reflecting the different aspects emphasised by the different denominations.

We have seen the main difference between the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations, were the former saw sport as a good educational tool and that is the primary focus to this day, while the latter have seen sport mainly as a way to create disciples of Christ. Through the work of the Jesuits and Salesians in their schools, sport was seen as a way for students to grow in character and bring a balance in their lives. Sport was intended as a way of bringing people together and help them experience the life of a community. All this contributed to a wider understanding of education and thus a broader understanding of the mission and evangelisation of the Church.

The current movement within the Catholic Church pushes towards being fully engaged in the world of sport and create a Christian vision of sport. Sport is increasingly being emphasised as a good way of engaging with one another and build bridges among individuals and nations.

Though the different traditions are increasingly influencing each other through the work done together, there is still some difference in the Protestant and Catholic views towards sport. The Catholic Church continues to see her role as one that guides sport in a continuous discovery of its true meaning, while Protestant denominations continue to engage with sport as a way of helping people to meet Christ. This is seen through the various documents and sport ministry strategies analysed in this study.

These various points led to the vision, mission and strategy presented here. Through the interviews and focus group held, this study sought to highlight the aspects and values which are most important in sport; seeing how the Church, particularly in Malta, could make the most of these for the people engaged in sport. The results show that the Church is relevant in this field and it is essential for her to incorporate sport in her mission.

The strategy presented follows the historical, sports ministries' and interviews' analyses to define three main areas where sports ministry within the Catholic Church in Malta should focus on for the next two years. The first area focuses on engaging with more sport involved people in Malta, especially in parishes and schools, so that the sport network in Malta could be widened. Together with this, making up the second area of focus, is the importance of communication and the growth in awareness of what sports ministry is all about. The work of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport must be made more visible, as well as all the resources available for sports ministries to grow in Malta. The third area is professionalism, with courses being given so that sports ministers and leaders could be trained and equipped with all that is needed.

Limitations of the study

The main limitation in this study was that the area of sports ministry in Malta is still in its infancy and thus has never been studied before. What could be applied or not is based solely on experience of people who are involved in sport in Malta and their outlook of the setting and what might work or not in Malta. Since sports ministry in Malta is still developing, many areas had to be omitted, such as the possibility of sports chaplains in Malta, because it was difficult to focus and delve into all the areas.

Another limitation was that the majority of the persons interviewed and participants in the focus group were educators, thus there could have been an imbalance in having too much emphasis on the importance of training and education.

Recommendations

The first recommendation would be to change the official name of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport to Sport Diocesan Commission (in Maltese 'Kummissjoni Djoċesana Sport' or KDS) so that all official records, communications and promotions would be uniform. This is also because the Commission's role is much wider than simply safeguarding the values in sport, as already discussed in this dissertation. A change in name is not cosmetic, but it also reflects the role of the Commission in looking at all of the aspects in sport. The Commission should also revise its mission statement, possibly applying the mission statement proposed here, so that it could be more concise and clear, for the reasons presented in this study.

The Commission should take on this strategy and apply it for the next two years. Just before the two years elapse, an evaluation should be held so that what had been done or not would be assessed and a new strategy could be developed. A three year strategy could eventually be better for more time and stability to develop the focus areas.

The Commission should engage closely with the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life as well as with the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*, the John Paul II Foundation 4 Sport and other sports ministries within the Catholic Church, for the benefit of the Commission and the widening of the network and promotion of sports ministries within the Catholic Church.

The Commission should continue to strengthen its relationship with other sports ministries within the different church denominations, especially through social and prayer sessions and the sharing of resources.

Recommendations for further studies

Further studies could focus on the role of sport in Catholic education, and how sport has contributed in the understanding of who the human being is and human development towards God. Another aspect would be to study the role of sport in community building and how it brings people closer to each other towards social integration and encounter. On the other hand it would be interesting to study the way sport has been commercialised and the effects this might be having on the community, especially on children.

More specifically related to this work would be a study of what eventually resulted from this strategy. It would be important and helpful to understand the reach of the strategy through a quantitative analyses. A study of the development of sports ministry in Malta would also be good, maybe looking at particular areas presented here and building on them (such as how the communication took place or the outcome of the training courses) since this study sought to set the basis for sports ministry to develop.

An interesting aspect to study would be the possibility of introducing sports chaplains in sports clubs, an aspect which was only briefly touched in this dissertation, but which would be of great benefit to sports ministry. Further possible studies also include looking into producing resources based on Catholic teaching for sports ministry, since such material is lacking in the Catholic Church.

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Appendix 1

36, 'Carisma'
Ġanni Faure Str.,
Tarxien TXN 2421

Information Letter

Dear Mr Joe Farrugia, Episcopal Delegate for the Laity,

I am currently reading for a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the University of Malta and I am undertaking a study entitled 'Sports Ministry in Malta: Vision and Strategy'. The study will be under the supervision of Bishop Joseph Galea Curmi (joe.galea-curmi@um.edu.mt), University of Malta. The research study aims to explore the history of the Church in relation to sports and how sports ministry has developed through time, in view of developing a vision and strategy for sports ministry in Malta.

I am requesting your permission to hold a two-hour Focus Group with the members of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Values in Sport with the aim of studying what the vision and strategy for sports ministry in Malta should be. The Focus Group will not be audio recorded but notes of what is being said will be taken. Names of the members of the Commission will not be mentioned.

The members of this Commission are free to participate, refuse or withdraw from the study at any point in time. I would also wish to offer you a copy of the dissertation once it is ready and assessed, to be used and applied for the benefit of the Church. A copy of the study will be accessible at the library of the University of Malta and also at the Faculty of Theology at the end of this study.

I appreciate your help in approving this request. For further information please contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you

Fr Bernard Micallef
S.Th.L Student
bernard.micallef.06@um.edu.mt
79325092

Bishop Joseph Galea Curmi
Supervisor
joe.galea-curmi@um.edu.mt

Appendix 2



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Msida MSD 2080, Malta

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www.um.edu.mt/theology

Faculty of Theology Research Ethics Committee

16 September 2019

Re. UNIQUE FORM ID: 2478_05082019_Bernard Micallef

Dear Rev. Micallef,

This is to confirm that your project "Sports Ministry in Malta: Vision and Strategy" has been reviewed by FREC on Monday 16 Sept and that it has been accepted with the following condition:

You can interview the members of the Commission on the condition that (1) you mention the members of the Commission [which is public knowledge] but that (2) you do not attribute any quotation to any specific member of the Commission. This means that any quotation will have to be attributed to 'Member 1', 'Member 2', etc.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R. Zammit'.

Rev. Dr Ray Zammit

Chairperson

Appendix 3

Interview questions

1. Which, in your opinion, are the three main values that are highlighted in sports?
2. How did sport affect you in your life; how have you seen it affect people? Did you see sport having a spiritual affect on people?
3. Can the Church have a role in the world of sports? What is/could this role be?
4. If one had to set up a sport ministry strategy within the Church, what should be the focus? What would you included? How can this be best applied to the strategy? What are practical ways tat would ensure its implementation and effectiveness?

Appendix 4

Worksheet

1. What is the current situation of the Church in Malta's involvement in sports? What is the current sports ministry?

2. Analyse the situation/organisation (SWOT, 'Seven S framework')

Points to help you analyse:

- Where is the organisation heading to?
- What is the organisation good at?
- How is the organisations dealing with its clients?
- What are the strengths of the organisation? The neutrals? The weaknesses?

3. Planning

- What are the desired outcomes? Where do we want to be? What do you envision?
- What are the opportunities and challenges in view of the desired outcomes?

- How do we get there? (mission)
- What are the objectives/aims?

- What are the priorities?
- Which are the areas to focus on?
- Which are the necessary values?

- What are the necessary human, financial, and material resources? What competences need to be obtained?
- What organisational structure is needed?

- How should the evaluation take place? What is the necessary structure for such evaluation?

Appendix 5

36, 'Carisma'
Ġanni Faure Str.,
Tarxien TXN 2421

Information Letter

Dear participant,

I am currently reading for a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the University of Malta and I am undertaking a study entitled 'Sports Ministry in Malta: Vision and Strategy'. The study will be under the supervision of Bishop Joseph Galea Curmi (joe.galea-curmi@um.edu.mt), University of Malta. The research study aims to explore the history of the Church in relation to sports and how sports ministry has developed through time, in view of developing a vision and strategy for sports ministry in Malta.

I would like to invite you to participate in a one-to-one interview of about 30 minutes in relation to your work and experience in the field of sports. Accepting to participate in this interview constitutes consent. These interviews will not be audio recorded but notes of what is being said will be taken. Your name might be included in the study since certain roles are specific and so add weight to what is being said. If you do not wish your name to be mentioned, feel free to tell me. You will be given the opportunity to read what I have written about your opinion before publication so that you will be able to rectify any errors.

You are free to participate, refuse or withdraw from the study at any point in time. A copy of the study will be accessible at the library of University of Malta and also at the Faculty of Theology at the end of this study.

I appreciate your help should you wish to participate in this study. For further information please contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you

Fr Bernard Micallef
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bernard.micallef.06@um.edu.mt
79325092

Bishop Joseph Galea Curmi
Supervisor
joe.galea-curmi@um.edu.mt

Appendix 6

36, 'Carisma'
Ġanni Faure Str.,
Tarxien TXN 2421

Information Letter

Dear participant,

I am currently reading for a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the University of Malta and I am undertaking a study entitled '**Sports Ministry in Malta: Vision and Strategy**'. The study will be under the supervision of Bishop Joseph Galea Curmi (joe.galea-curmi@um.edu.mt), University of Malta. The research study aims to explore the history of the Church in relation to sports and how sports ministry has developed through time, in view of developing a vision and strategy for sports ministry in Malta.

I would like to invite you to participate in a Focus Group of about two hours in relation to your work within the Diocesan Commission for Sports. Accepting to participate in this Focus Group constitutes consent. The Focus Group will not be audio recorded but notes of what is being said will be taken. Your name might be mentioned in the study because of your role within the Commission, but if you do not wish for this to happen, feel free to tell me. On the other hand, individual names will not be mentioned for direct quotes. You will be given the opportunity to read what I have written about your opinion before publication so that you will be able to rectify any errors.

You are free to participate, refuse or withdraw from the study at any point in time. A copy of the study will be accessible at the library of University of Malta and also at the Faculty of Theology at the end of this study.

I appreciate your help should you wish to participate in this study. For further information please contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you

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