



Football is the most practiced sport in the world. There is no place nor park on the planet where a football game has not been played. It's easy to understand its popularity, if we consider that in order to practice it, it's only necessary to have something to kick (it doesn't even have to be a ball), you don't need an opponent or an arc, just kick a of soda can down a hallway.

Another universal feature of football is that its rules and logic as a game is extremely simple and understandable for everyone, which makes it possible to play without having a referee. It's so simple that Pope Francis uses football expressions to talk about spiritual life: *"Jesus asks us to follow him all his life, he asks us to be his disciples, to" play on his team. " Most of you like sports. Here in Brazil, as in other countries, football is a national passion, yes or no? Well, what does a player do when he is called to be part of a team? He has to train and train a lot. This is our life as disciples of the Lord. "* (Pope Francis, Wyd Rio 2013)

The same simplicity in its form also makes many irregularities occur in its practice. Irregularities that sometimes (when played with a lot of passion) make it difficult for us to be good Christians inside the field.

For this reason, we want to share some ideas so that you can be a good Christian at all times. We warn you that it's not an easy task, because probably those who play with you won't be as honest, but believe me, the field is also a space of evangelization. Cheer up!

### **1. Do not stay silent if by mistake they charge in your favor. Winning honestly is for men.**

Many times, no one clearly sees what happened in a match and only you know what really happened. Being honest and telling the truth – even if it doesn't favor your team – is not easy but it's the best. This won't only speak well of you but make your triumphs truly a product of your effort and not your omissions. An example of this was Miroslav Klose, a player from Naples, who casually scored a goal with his hand, the referee didn't see it and took the goal as valid, but he with much honesty, let the referee know his mistake.

## **2. Do not be an actor. If it's a fault, ask to be charged without whining**

Unfortunately, it's a common scene in professional football that a player exaggerates the faults. In many games we see players rolling on the ground, shouting, covering their faces and making a scandal of apocalyptic proportions when they make a fault. Most of these situations are falls or blows without intent. If someone makes a foul or something that harms you, claiming is fine, justice and truth are the first thing, but to roll on the ground until they collect and then run out as if nothing, is not the most Christian thing to do. Remember, theater is not a sport. An antitestimony of this was David Luiz, player of Chelsea, who not only faked a fault that provoked the expulsion of who supposedly did it, but also could not contain laughter when they mistakenly charged in his favor.

## **3. Help your opponent if they need it**

Sometimes the passion for the game, the triumph, the honor or whatever you feel when you're on the field, instead of making you see your opponent as a brother, you see him as an enemy, a rival, an unfriendly person to be defeated. Have you ever thought how grateful you should be that the team across the street exists? How could you play if there wasn't an opposing team that was willing to compete under the same rules as you? A nice testimony of this is given by these two Polish teams.

## **4. Encourage your teammates when they are wrong: Do you want to win or just let go of your anger?**

If the mere fact of being wrong is already uncomfortable, imagine when the mistake happens in public, even more so that this means that all my team gets hurt when the error is an auto-goal. It is enough shame for the poor man as if for you to go and rub it on his face. An example of this is the goalkeeper of Ajax Mickey Van Der Hart, who was mistaken misjudging and made the pass that gave a partner to become a goal against that led to the defeat of his team. It only remained to support him, because the sadness and frustration in his face are enough to understand that he didn't need to be reprehend.

## **5. Passion that transforms into swearing and insults do not contribute anything.**

When they " send greetings to your mom" or send greetings to your grandmother, when you pull the T-shirt and the hug you receive is not of affection (and all the other things that happen on the field), emotions arise not so favorable for the good progress of the game. Turn them around and allow them to serve as motivation to keep striving in the game. You must be careful not to lose your mind so that these doesn't become changes in behavior such as aggression, disrespect or physical violence against others. Count to 10, don't return the aggression, take a deep breath, make your allegations moderately, apologize and remember that it's a

game: life is not all of this. A well-known Argentine brand humorously portrays this reality so typical of football.

## **6. Tell me how you play football and I'll tell you who you are**

Being a facilitator, being generous, looking for others to get the best of themselves and using my gifts in favor of my colleagues is a way of loving that is applied both on and off the field. It's not just to take advantage of the opportunities that football gives me to demonstrate my talent but to help others, and even if it sounds very ecclesial, to make community on the field. A beautiful example, crowned by a beautiful goal, is Emre Can, Liverpool player, which not only demonstrates his ability to control the ball, but also enables his partner in an exceptional way giving us a jewel.

## **7. Don't be proud. If you're wrong, ask for forgiveness**

Sometimes we make a mistake in a pass or a reception, other times we do not measure our strengths and hit someone, or there are times when we do not understand our teammates. Recognizing our mistakes is not something that is reserved for the confessional, there are moments in the game where I must be humble and admit that I could have done better. It is well known the time where Luis Suárez, a player of the Uruguayan national team, bitten a rival. They mocked him a lot and sanctioned him: he humbly offered his apologies to all who harmed his uncontrolled conduct.

## **8. Correct, coordinate, encourage, help, comment: Be in touch with your team!**

We already said that turning our team into a community is a good goal to fulfill. Recognizing that - as in the Church - we are all part of a body with particular characteristics, virtues and limitations, will help us not only to get the best out of ourselves, but to improve our performance as a team. Communicating is the key to living communion. There is nothing sadder than a team that is shouting at all times scolding, teams where only confusion is seen, and the ball goes from one side to the other senseless. The subjects of the video give us an example of communication, preparing the execution of a very coordinated shot and not to mention a single word. As the Second Vatican Council teaches: "*Sports exercises and demonstrations... They help to preserve the spiritual equilibrium, even of the community, and to establish fraternal relations between men of all classes, nations and races*" (Gaudium et spes, 61).

## **9. Do not be negative with yourself: Trying has value!**

Football must be one of the few sports where the "almost" are statistically considered. When we see the summary of a game, the sports rapporteurs count the "goal shots", the "Corner shots", etc., to indicate that one team has been

theoretically more offensive than the other In fact, we consider that our team plays well when it tries many shots on goal regardless of whether they pass close to the goal or not. Try again and again, try close and far, think of new strategies and methods, is something that not only applies on the field also applies in life.

### **10. How long did you struggle or how did Jesus react?**

The effort has a value itself, it shows our character, our values, our convictions and expresses our passion for what we do. Striving to achieve any noble goal, whether it be a goal, a college degree, keeping a job or strengthening our family, is a big thing. Jesus himself invites us to make an extra effort, to run an extra minute and get out of our comfort. In the *In the Gospel of Saint John*, when he challenges us to love as he has loved us, we could take ideas for football, we could say for this case: "play as I have played" and in this way be like Jesus in his ways, feelings, values, commitment, struggle and love. Imitating it outside and inside the field will not only change our game and performance, it also will change our whole life and that of those around us. Remember that the field is also a field of evangelization! An example of this are all those who know that they will not be super stars of the sport, week by week, they strive and sweat to the last drop leaving everything in each pass.