



The Holy See

**GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO "CELTIC FOOTBALL CLUB" (SCOTLAND)**

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 29 November 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear friends,

I am pleased to welcome you here to the Vatican, during your stay in Rome following your UEFA Champions League match with Lazio yesterday evening.

While it is true that winning rather than losing a match is always preferred, it is not the most important aspect! More vital is the example you give when winning or losing, both on and off the field. An example that embodies the virtues of courage, perseverance, generosity and respect for the God-given dignity of others. Indeed, Celtic Football Club was founded in 1887 with the specific goal of alleviating poverty in the City of Glasgow. This was truly a charitable undertaking for the sake of the most needy of our brothers and sisters. Yet, how much the world of football has changed since then. In particular, the financial footprint of the "Beautiful Game" has greatly increased, and at times can risk making football only attractive for reasons of monetary profit.

The valued legacy of your Club, then, places a heavy responsibility upon your shoulders, reminding you to be good role-models, especially for young people. The standards you are called to set concern not only your abilities as sportsmen and the classic qualities required to excel, but are also about your personal integrity. In this regard, men and women should see in you not just fine footballers but also people of kindness, big-hearted men who know how to be wise stewards of the many benefits you receive from your privileged positions within society.

With these brief remarks, I pray that you will continue to remember and bear witness to everything

that makes sport genuinely good and noble. May Almighty God bless each of you and your families. I wish you a safe journey home to Scotland, and ask you, please, to pray for me!

Impromptu words of the Holy Father

Good morning!

Please excuse me; with this cold I can't speak too much, but I am better than yesterday. Thank you for your visit. The father will say what I should have said to you.

Reading of the greeting in English

I will speak to you in Italian. I wanted to say one thing to you. In sport, the most beautiful thing is gratuitousness, that beauty of playing together. Please, never lose the amateur spirit! This is the beautiful thing: the *amateur* spirit, where sport is for sport. This means a great deal. Thank you for this. It doesn't matter if we have won or if we have not won, it doesn't matter. Everyone struggles to win, but victory is not the goal, that can be defeat: victory is the entire process of playing together, playing as a team. Maintain the amateur spirit. That is the most beautiful thing about sport. Thank you for this visit.

Now, I would like to greet you one by one.

The Pope greets the players

And a final piece of advice. It has come to my attention that you have in your land a very important speciality, a special "milk"... A little is fine!

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