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Audience with the delegation of the National Football League (NFL)

At 9.00 this morning, in the Study of the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the delegation from the National Football League (NFL), and addressed the following greeting to them:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to greet you, the members and directors of the American Pro Football Hall of Fame, and to welcome you to the Vatican. As many of you know, I am an avid follower of “football”, but where I come from, the game is played very differently!

I thank Mr. Anderson for his gracious words of introduction, which stressed the traditional values of sportsmanship that you seek to embody, both on the field and in your own lives, your families and your communities. Our world, and especially our young people, need models, persons who show us how to bring out the best in ourselves, to use our God-given gifts and talents, and, in so doing, to point the way to a better future for our societies.

Teamwork, fair play and the pursuit of personal excellence are the values – in the religious sense, we can say virtues – that have guided your own commitment on the field. Yet these same values are urgently needed off the field, on all levels of our life as a community. They are the values that help build a culture of encounter, in which we anticipate and meet the needs of our brothers and sisters, and combat the exaggerated individualism, indifference and injustice that hold us back from living as one human family. How greatly our world needs this culture of encounter!

Dear friends, I pray that your visit to the Eternal City will increase your gratitude for the many gifts you have received and inspire you to share them ever more generously in shaping a more fraternal world.

Upon you and your families I invoke God’s blessings of joy and peace.

God bless you all!
