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Audience with a delegation from the “Real Club de Tennis Barcelona”

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the “Real Club de Tennis Barcelona”, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of your founding as a sports club, and I am glad to be able to emphasize once again the opportunities sport offers for the growth of every person and for society. And today we must congratulate the Italians, because they won in Australia yesterday, didn't they? So, congratulations to them too.

Tennis in particular, not being a team sport, but rather individual or in pairs, presents an interesting aspect of our reflection. It would seem that the challenge between players has to do primarily with the desire to prevail over the adversary. However, looking at the history of your club, one can observe that in reality, ever since its English origin, it is an expression of the openness of the founders to the good that could come from outside and from dialogue with other cultures, which enabled them to give rise to new realities.

This is a lesson that is as valid these days as it was 125 years ago. In tennis, as in life, we cannot always win, but it will be an enriching challenge if, playing politely according to the rules, we learn that it is not a battle but a dialogue that involves our effort and allows us to improve. Conceive of sport a little not just as a battle, but also as a dialogue. A dialogue is established that, in the case of tennis, very often succeeds in becoming artistic.

In the court of play, as in existence, there are times we feel alone, and others when we feel supported by those who play this match of life with us. But, when we play “singles”, we are always in the presence of the Lord who teaches us the meaning of respect, understanding and the need for constant communication with the other.

To conclude, allow me to say one last thing to you. You have formed figures in international tennis, and it is a great challenge, but when we work with these children, who dream of an excellent sporting future, the demands

of training cannot prevail over their integral growth; there is nothing more important than this human and spiritual development. And sport must help in this development, not be at the centre, but help in this. Therefore, take care of children, take care of those who can benefit from the values of sport in complex social situations, and also of those who might be successful in high level competitions. May they not cease to be children! Thank you.

[Blessing]
