

Think about it! (8)

As I write these words, millions of people throughout the planet are following the football world championship. We're talking about a 'religion' that can boast more and more unconditional followers.

Football has its own gods: the stars at any given time. It also has its beliefs; every follower has his or her own particular convictions about what team is the best, about who the 'number one' in that team is, about good and bad coaches, about the reasons for success or failure, about the decisions of referees, about fair and unfair results, etc. The football fans' religion also has its own rites and ceremonies, both on and off the field; and its own hymns, praises, prayers and even its own martyrs – for in the name of football there have been those who have killed, and others, their victims, who have died!

In the past people worshipped the stars in the sky; now they worship the stars of sport. In the past they bowed down before statues; now they bow down before real live people. The Greeks and the Romans worshipped gods that were Olympian versions of themselves; nowadays people still worship Olympic gods, but ones selected from among ourselves.

So what's wrong with all this?: well, in a word, it's idolatry. What's idolatry? The essence of it is taking the only true God out of his rightful place, and putting anyone or anything else in his place. Some of today's idols are: money and all that it can buy, sex, the 'telly' and cinema, and football and other sports.

So what about you?; are you an idolater? Why not put yourself to the test? Think about the following ten questions and compare the place that God has in your life with the place that other things have:

- (1) What things do you talk about?; how much do you talk about God?
- (2) Do you talk to God?; how's the communication with him?
- (3) What things do you think about?; how much do you think about God?
- (4) Do you remember God when everything's going well?
- (5) How do you spend your free time?; how much time do you give to God?
- (6) What do spend your money on?; do you give some of it to 'God'?
- (7) What are your interests?; how interested are you in God?
- (8) What are your dreams and plans?; does God figure in them?
- (9) Do you love God more than anyone else or is there someone you love more than him?
- (10) If God didn't exist, what difference would it make to your life?

Apart from the matter of idolatry, football, when you think about it, is something so unimportant when you compare it – not just with God, but with all the really important things in life: justice; the people in the world who are starving; war; personal relationships; sickness and death; etc. And yet we consider so important twenty-two men running after a ball like madmen?!

Football is not wrong; no, what's wrong is what we've turned it into. Believe me, the day will come, sooner or later, when football won't seem so important to us. The sooner we realize that, the better!

Andrew Birch
pastor@iglesiapalma.com