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Code: ZE05111720**Date: 2005-11-17****Vatican More Anxious to Get Into the Game****After Holding an International Seminar on Sports**

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 17, 2005 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Church is more aware of the need to be present in the sports world, including institutionally, as the Vatican closed out its first international seminar on the subject.

"The first thing we have learned in these days has been the extent of the problem," said Bishop Josef Clemens, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, organizer of the seminar. He delivered the closing address Nov. 12.

The meeting was opened and led by Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

"The Church is more committed, institutionally," Bishop Clemens told Vatican Radio. "She has understood that the time has come to institute our new 'Church and Sport' section in the Council for the Laity, point of reference for this great world of sport."

This section was started with the approval of Pope John Paul II shortly before the Athens Olympics.

The seminar was attended by 50 sportsmen, trainers, directors of sports organizations, as well as chaplains and experts from 18 countries who reflected on "The World of Sport Today: Field of Christian Commitment."

Bishop Clemens said: "I was very impressed that the Church is already present in the sports realm in many countries: with chaplains, but also at the academic and university level. I am happy as, with the Holy See, we are finally present in this great world."

Downside

The bishop, who for years was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's secretary, mentioned the dark side of sports: "We have seen the thousands of problems: sports and commercialization, the problem of doping, the problem of violence, as well as the role of the media.

"In this field, the voice of the Catholic Church, and the voice of Catholics committed in this field, is very important. I think we are in the phase of reflection and that we want to build, so to speak, a network of responsibility at different levels."

In particular, the German prelate said, the Church needs the "testimony of the sportsman," of a "good Christian" and "witness of the faith."

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