



New Orleans Saints quarterback Derek Carr is sacked by Carolina Panthers linebacker Charles Harris during the second half of an NFL football game Sunday, Nov. 3, 2024, in Charlotte, N.C. (AP/Rusty Jones)

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The New Orleans Saints may be one of the [worst teams in the NFL](#) this season, but at least they can count on continued prayers from Pope Francis.

The pope – or at least someone in the Vatican communications office – has been inadvertently rooting for the Saints since Nov. 1 – All Saints Day – even as the team lost yet another game and [fired their coach](#).

Thanks to an automatic function on X, formerly Twitter, the team’s fleur-de-lis emoji is automatically added to the hashtag #Saints. That has given the impression that the @Pontifex account on X, which has 18.4 million followers and happens to be tweeting a lot about saints lately, was talking about the team when in fact the pope was extolling how actual saints “are precious pearls and are always living and relevant.”

The comments sections on the handful of papal #Saint tweets in recent days have blown up, with more than twice as many comments as normal @Pontifex tweets.

“They need more than what you can do Pope Francis. They need to consult the big guy,” wrote @DaBears\_26 on Nov. 2.

In the past week, Saints fans have lamented yet another loss [at last-place Carolina](#), which extended the Saints’ losing streak to seven games — their longest since 1999 — and brought their record to 2-7. And they have welcomed the firing of Coach Dennis Allen on Monday.

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“Even the Pope is excited we fired Dennis Allen,” wrote @JonoBarnes.

Some referred to the unwanted distinction earned last week by Derek Carr: He became the first NFL quarterback to [lose to 31 teams](#). While others, non-Saints fans, asked the pope for some equal time.

“Any chance the @HoustonTexans can catch a blessing too?” asked @DustyLeeCook

The Rev. Matthew Schneider, a prominent voice on Catholic Twitter, has been trying for five years to get the Vatican communications office to fix the #Saints fleur-de-lis emoji issue, apparently in vain.

Back in 2019, he posted a comment on another @Pontifex saintly tweet that automatically referenced the team, urging the Vatican communications office to check the hashtags before posting. He did so again this past week, this time directing his request to X.

“It was cute the first time but it’s becoming tiresome,” he wrote.

The @Pontifex account, which opened in 2012, is the official English-language Twitter handle of the pope. The pope tweets in other languages in variations of the handle.

The Vatican spokesman didn’t respond to a request for comment late Thursday. For the record, Francis is a lifelong fan of the San Lorenzo soccer club of his native Buenos Aires.