

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

THE SAINTS AND THE SUPERBOWL...

Yes, I know that the New Orleans Saints are not going to the Superbowl after a bad call in their recent game against the Los Angeles Rams! So it will be the Rams against the New England Patriots in the game that will be played this weekend at the Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia. The Superbowl is a big interest for many people and it's fun to watch, even to make a little wager on a t times. But for some people football and the Superbowl can take on the aura of a religious ritual.

It might be interesting to compare the Superbowl to Catholic Mass! For instance, Superbowl fans spend a lot of time and money in order to enjoy the game. They will think nothing of being there for hours and people plan tailgate parties and are wildly enthusiastic. At Mass each Sunday it's pretty obvious that some people are very bored-especially if the Mass goes longer than forty five minutes!

Several weeks ago during the homily some young fellow just kept glancing at his phone so I just had to avert my glance in order to keep myself from getting "psyched out" as they say!" I read about a humorous reference to the sports term, "sudden death" the definition: it's what happens to the attention span of the congregation if the priest goes overtime! Well, it was an attempt at humor!

What is not so funny at times is that while many of us, Catholics included, are so passionate about sports, we are less so when it comes to the "bigger game" that is known as our faith. All of us need a little more enthusiasm when it comes to our Catholic religion, maybe like the enthusiasm of the Patriot fans and the Rams this Sunday!

At Church on Sunday in his parish a priest friend of mine offered this description of his parishioners. He said, "The expression of people's faces reminds me more of a funeral than of a resurrected Lord. Rather than a sea of joyful faces, it looks like everyone just sucked a lemon!" Maybe it's true. I am reminded of that lector at Saint Teresa's Parish in the Bronx. He stood up at Mass to read the Cardinal's letter and said, "His Eminence the Cardinal is against abortion and enthusiasm!" Certainly the Church is against abortion but it's not against enthusiasm!

The word enthusiasm means to be "filled with God" and when we are filled with God, then we should be truly joyful-even more joyful than if we had tickets to the Superbowl and were all going to Atlanta this weekend! The Mass on Sunday is our "Superbowl" and something very important happens there. Jesus Christ,-the Son of the living becomes present on our altars in the consecrated host and chalice.

Certainly we priests should work harder at making Mass more inspirational and beautiful. But the faithful too must come to realize and appreciate in a deeper way the great mystery that is the Holy Eucharist and how blessed we are to possess it in our churches. Yes, I know the saints are not in the Superbowl but all of us are called to be saints in the wider game that is known as life.

In his apostolic exhortation "Rejoice and be glad" the Holy Father Pope Francis wrote this: "The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints!" As players on God's team, let us strive to win the trophy that awaits us-life on high with Christ Jesus!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*