

Catholicity in Sports - The Hail Mary Pass

The date was December 28, 1975.

This is the NFL play that came to be known as “The Hail Mary” pass.

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEZKpY8t4EQ>

The man throwing the ball was Roger Staubach the man catching the ball was Drew Pearson.

A few years ago, while addressing students at a Catholic school’s career day in Dallas, Staubach encouraged those present to remain strong in the faith through any adversity.

“Life has its twists and turns... The important thing is having the perseverance to maintain your faith and do the right things as you deal with the obstacles. There will be challenges that you will face, but you are going to help each other and you are going to get through it and people are going to help you.”

In reference to his famous “Hail Mary” pass, Staubach said to the students,

“I could have said the ‘Our Father’ or ‘The Glory Be.’ It could be the ‘Glory Be Pass’... The Blessed Virgin is very proud of me. We have a great relationship because of that.”¹

Asked about the “Hail Mary” in 2017² Staubach said.

¹ <https://aleteia.org/2017/01/10/how-roger-staubachs-prayer-became-the-first-hail-mary-pass/>

² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/columnist/bell/2017/01/13/dallas-cowboys-roger-staubach-hail-mary-green-bay-packers-aaron-rodgers/96570268/>

“Now it’s a term used for everything... Politicians and everybody else use it. One of the worse times I heard it used was when I was watching someone on TV talk about O.J. Simpson, and the commentator said, ‘Man, it’s going to take a Hail Mary for him to get another trial.’”

Here’s another non-coincidence, the term “Hail Mary pass” was known because of Staubach but not widely used until another Catholic came along with another football “miracle”. It was at the Orange Bowl on 23 November, 1984 and the University of Miami had all but won the game against the once Catholic now Jesuit Boston College. With 6 seconds remaining quarterback Doug Flutie scrambled away from rushing Miami linemen and hurled the football 65 yards in the air to be caught by Bernard Phelan of the game winning touchdown. After the game Boston media, not yet woke and drunk on rainbow beer and sodomites parading in diapers on the St Patrick’s Day Parade, delighted in saying that Flutie had thrown “a Hail Mary” pass. In fact, there is a statue commemorating the play at BC today, revealed in November of 2008, and inscribed on the base is this.

DOUG FLUTIE

THE “HAIL MARY” PASS

Thanks to an article posted at catholicism.org by the esteemed Dr. Paul Lavin on this very topic I can share some other recent uses of the “Hail Mary pass”³.

³ <https://catholicism.org/just-being-a-good-sport-or-blasphemy-you-decide.html>

High school team Hail Mary: Escalon edges Pacheco with Hail Mary; Cameron the quarterback can't keep relying on the **Hail Mary Pass**; **Hail Mary pass** dubbed 'Plain City Prayer' leads to wild finish.

Recently I was watching an NFL game and at the end of the game, with the Minnesota Vikings needing a football miracle, Fox Sports Announcer Chris Meyers, makes the call.

[INSERT AUDIO SLIDE]

POINTS: There are two Catholic themed MLB teams in CA:

The San Diego Padres

The California Angels

There is one Catholic themed team in the NFL (I use "themed" loosely!).

To this day the New Orleans Saints still use the Fleur de Lis as their logo which is reproduced on every chochkey imaginable. Hundreds of thousands of "Saints fans" actually are SAINTS, as St. King Louis IX & St Joan d'Arc, fans whether they know it or not! The Saints franchise name was chosen by the school children of New Orleans who had picked the name in a newspaper contest but there's another Catholic twist to the story.

The deal to award New Orleans an NFL franchise was actually reached a week before it was announced. Dave Dixon, the genius architect and Catholic behind the Louisiana Superdome suggested to NFL

Commissioner Pete Rozelle that the announcement be delayed until All Saints Day, 1967 because New Orleans was at that time, still a city that took its Catholic heritage seriously. Dixon told an interviewer that he even cleared the name with New Orleans' Archbishop Philip M. Hannan: "He thought it would be a good idea. He had an idea the team was going to need all the help it could get" Dixon joked. Mr. Dixon was invested as a Knight of Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem in 1985, and, in 1989, as a Knight of St. Gregory. Both are papal orders. (not even Charles Coulombe has TWO knightships!)

ONE MORE EXAMPLE

In the 1987 Superbowl between the New York Giants and Denver Broncos, Marc Bavaro, the Giants' tight end, fulfilled his boyhood dream of scoring a touchdown in a Superbowl but Bavaro would use the moment, not to dance a jig around the endzone and taunt his competitors, he had something much more important in mind.

[VIDEO]

THE DISCUSSION-THE MARK OF CATHOLICITY IN SPORTS

First let's establish that God is cool with us playing sports. The revisionist history of pseudo triumphant neo-Calvinists is that it wasn't until Luther & Calvin came along and liberated Christians from the iron maiden like stranglehold Catholics had placed on their bodies and what they were allowed to do with them, that sports and recreation, you know, fun, were finally invented by John Calvin, I suppose, kicking the head of a Catholic martyr between his vertically stuck into the ground femurs as a goal, that

sport was invented; stupid no-fun, rigid Catholics! But as St Augustine, chastised Origen on this point 1500 years ago, this knock against the Church is as bogus as Calvin is justified⁴.

*“And I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment, that a man so erudite and well versed in ecclesiastical literature, should not have observed, in the first place, how opposed this is to the meaning of this authoritative Scripture, which, in recounting all the works of God, regularly adds, “And God saw that it was **good**;” and, when all were completed, inserts the words, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very **good**.” Was it not obviously meant to be understood that there was no other cause of the world's creation than that good creatures should be made by a **good** God?”*

We can count most sports as good because the good they produce are self evident. The Jesuit Theologian, Fr. Patrick Kelly has written several books on this very subject and is regarded as an expert on this subject (insert Jesuit joke here); ⁵ that whether you call it sports or recreation, it has been a part of Christian life since the catacombs.

“In addition to participating in the sacraments, which made use of water, fire, oil, bread and wine, and using images in worship, medieval Christians went on pilgrimages; participated in processions; put on mystery and morality plays; sculpted—and venerated—statues; fingered their rosary beads; blessed themselves with holy water; lit candles;

⁴ <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45304/45304-h/45304-h.htm>

⁵ <http://www.laici.va/content/dam/laici/documenti/sport/eng/for%20further%20study/Patrick%20Kelly,%20SJ%20%20Catholics%20and%20Sports,%20An%20Historical%20and%20Theological%20Overview.pdf>

crawled to the cross; put ashes on their forehead; prayed in churches and cathedrals with stained glass windows and woodcuts; and engaged in corporal works of mercy.”

Then of course we have Holy Scripture itself where St. Paul, in First Corinthians, uses the well known athleticism of the Greeks to help them wrap their minds around performing the Faith as they performed at sports.

Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. [25] And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air: But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.

THE POPE’S BICYCLIST-GINO BARTALI-APOSTOLIC

Gino Bartali was born in Florence in 1914, was a champion road cyclist who won the Italian *Giro d'Italia* multi-stage race three times (in 1936, 1937 and 1946) and the *Tour de France* twice (in 1938 and 1948). He was devout Catholic his entire life. At the end of that race in Paris, he had taken his winner’s bouquet to the church of Our Lady of Victories – dedicating his win to the Mother of God. It was known that Bartali not only regularly attended Holy Mass before races but also had a shrine dedicated to St. Therese in his hotel room, whilst all the time exhorting his fellow Catholic riders to practice their faith and to sanctify their professional work.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Florence, Elia Dalla Costa, asked to see Bartali. This was not unusual in itself, that primate had married the cyclist and his bride, Andrea, in 1940. But on this occasion, the impetus of the meeting came from the Vatican where the then Supreme Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, had specifically asked the cardinal to escalate his secret operation that was then helping countless Jews flee the ever watchful eye of the German SS. This operation was centred on a Franciscan Friary in Assisi and consisted of forging travel documents and passports to allow Jews to travel from danger or to remain where they lived but with new identities. Bartali was asked to be one of the chief couriers of these documents – concealed in the inner tubing of his handlebars. His sporting status meant that no one would think anything of his cycling long distances on a regular basis. It was a perfect ruse. It worked.

In the 1948 Tour de France...

His victory was to have a unifying effect on his divided homeland – some suggested even averting a possible civil war. Not least because of a picture taken on one of the stages. It was of the two rival Italian riders caught on camera sharing a water bottle. One passes it to another, they both drink, before the bottle is replaced, and then in the sweat and the heat continue to race. For some, that picture was to become a symbol. Post-war Italy – left & centre – could co-exist, could work together, they were born with a common heritage, something that transcended any new found political posturing.

HOCKEY -THE PENALTY BOX

BOXING - MARQUES OF QUENSEBURY RULES (STORY OF OSCAR WILDE)

THE AUGUSTINIAN JUST WAR THEORY IN SPORTS.

HANDSHAKES AFTER CONTESTS

CHESTERON IN *WILLIAM BLAKE*...

“Every man of us to-day is three men. There is in every modern European three powers so distinct as to be almost personal, the trinity of our earthly destiny. The three may be rudely summarised thus. First and nearest to us is the Christian, the man of the historic church, of the creed that must have coloured our minds incurably whether we regard it (as I do) as the crown and combination of the other two, or whether we regard it as an accidental superstition which has remained for two thousand years. First, then, comes the Christian; behind him comes the Roman, the citizen of that great cosmopolitan realm of reason and order in the level and equality of which Christianity arose. He is the stoic who is so much sterner than the anchorites. He is the republican who is so much prouder than kings. He it is that makes straight roads and clear laws, and for whom good sense is good enough. And the third man—he is harder to speak of. He has no name, and all true tales of him are blotted out; yet he walks behind us in every forest path and wakes within us when the wind wakes at night. He is the origins—he is the man in the forest. It is no part of our subject to elaborate the point; but it may be said in passing that the chief claim of Christianity is exactly this—that it revived the pre-Roman madness, yet brought into it the Roman order. The gods had really died long before

Christ was born. What had taken their place was simply the god of government—*Divus Cæsar*. The pagans of the real Roman Empire were nothing if not respectable. It is said that when Christ was born the cry went through the world that Pan was dead. The truth is that when Christ was born Pan for the first time began to stir in his grave. The pagan gods had become pure fables when Christianity gave them a new lease of life as devils. I venture to wager that if you found one man in such a society who seriously believed in the personal existence of Apollo, he was probably a Christian. Christianity called to a kind of clamorous resurrection all the old supernatural instincts of the forests and the hill. But it put upon this occult chaos the Roman idea of balance and sanity. Thus, marriage was a sacrament, but mere sex was not a sacrament as it was in many of the frenzies of the forest. Thus wine was a sacrament with Christ; but drunkenness was not a sacrament as with Dionysus. In short, Christianity (merely historically seen) can best be understood as an attempt to combine the reason of the market-place with the mysticism of the forest. It was an attempt to accept all the superstitions that are necessary to man and to be philosophic at the end of them. Pagan Rome has sought to bring order or reason among men. Christian Rome sought to bring order and reason among gods.”