NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

How does God play a role in the Ravens' Super Bowl victory?

Pat Perriello | Feb. 4, 2013 NCR Today

I'm not sure if it is kosher or not, but I feel compelled to comment on the victory of the Baltimore Ravens in Super Bowl XLVII. The fact that there is a religious angle to this particular game provides a bit of an argument for why these comments may be appropriate.

Retiring Hall of Fame line backer Ray Lewis has brought religion into the run-up to the Super Bowl and has been criticized for it in some quarters. Some understand him to be saying that somehow God has been on the side of the Baltimore Ravens. Ray has prayed to God for a victory, and God will answer his prayers.

In Lewis' defense, I believe his theology is on target, though his wording is not as clear as it might be. I believe what Lewis is actually saying is that God has become an important part of his life and the lives of his teammates. God has been with him and them. He has strengthened them and helped them to play to the best of their abilities. They owe to God whatever it is they are able to accomplish. Their prayer to God is that he will enable them to play to the best of their abilities.

Such an interpretation allows for God's involvement with other teams and players. It also maintains divine neutrality. After all, even Notre Dame cannot claim that God is on their side.

Having said all of that, I think it is worth sharing the following anecdote enunciated by a pastor at a Sunday Mass recently in the Baltimore archdiocese. Although it is meant to be humorous, who can say that there may not be a grain of truth to it, especially after Sunday's game?

In the story, Peyton Manning of the Denver Broncos dies and goes to heaven. He is warmly received, and God himself shows him around heaven. Finally, God takes Manning to a nice but tiny house and tells him this will be his new home. He points out that not everyone got his own house in heaven. Manning understands and is grateful, thanking God for his generosity.

Later, Manning happens to look down the street and notices this incredibly large and beautiful mansion. Flying in front of the mansion is the largest Ravens flag Manning has ever seen. Manning says, "Wait a minute. I had a pretty impressive career down below. Why should Ray Lewis receive such a mansion as this?" God looks at Peyton and says, "My son, that is not Ray Lewis' house. That's my house."

Source URL (retrieved on *12/13/2013 - 04:04*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/how-does-god-play-role-ravens-super-bowl-victory