



February 12, 2010

Dear Friends:

JUST SUPER!

After nixing Tyler's request to tape his Sir Saint flag to the podium, I should have known, this wasn't going to be a normal Sunday. I further realized this as I walked in and saw the entire worship team swathed in black and gold. A sea of 9's, 25's, and 88's spotted the rooms as both morning crowds showed up "in the spirit". We all got into the act; Worship was sweet, the Word was strong and from Linda's glittery fleur-de-les shirt to our "jerseyed up" usher team, it was just a great day.

This "spirit" had even permeated the AV team as I noticed the video screens and monitors had replaced the traditional sky blue background and white letters with a black background and gold letters trimmed in white. I then noticed that the fleur-de-les insignia had been substituted for the LifeGate logo.

I kept it pretty straight until after the "May the Lord bless you and keep you moment" when I reminded them that the Original Saint made His triumphant debut on the back of a broken, tied up Colt. History was gonna repeat today at 5:20pm.

However, I must admit, at the end of the 10-0 first quarter, my faith was being tested and, in something that I will explain later, I thought it might have been my fault.

About that time, although we had decided to politely decline the party invites so that we could quietly take it all in, all four of our phones started rumbling and the messages started rolling in until the game was long over.

In a blink, the room overflowed as we shared the moment with friends from all over. Just a snapshot of some of the messages... Charlie in New Jersey, "OMG, today is the day!"... From Detroit, Bill said, "Linda needs to pray harder. Go Saints" . . . From Jerry in Nebraska, "Pray!" . . . Mark in Florida, "Gotta pray harder for your team" . . . Diana in Texas, "We're praying. Who Dat!" It was a blast and the tenor of those and about 20 more messages were filled with the same fun and hopeful sentiment . . ."hold your breath and pray".

All of the feeling was Pro Saints except for one.

Mr. Gaither lives near Indianapolis and just loves his Colts. After the 10-0 start, the loving text said, "Take an aspirin and go to bed. Peyton will take care of it." I haven't heard back from him but I am working on a new song . . . "Because we won, I can face tomorrow".

106 million people saw the show and when it was over, America had a new team and many enduring images that will stay with us for a long time. Horns were honking, buttons were busting even before the trophy was hoisted and we were especially gratified as Drew, Reggie and many of the other victors gave glory to God.

Even with the awful halftime show (at least the lighting was cool), it was a perfect, special night that had been along time in coming. The WHO was blown away by The Who Dats, and you must admit, Roger Daltrey and Pete Townsend looked more like candidates for the Howard and Vestal chairs in the next Homecoming Video than the announced and anticipated "Rock Icons".

On Tuesday, Linda, Tyler and I (College Senior Geoff had a class) bundled up and headed downtown for the historic Victory Parade. Since Tyler's entire wardrobe now mostly consists of Championship regalia, he was ready in a minute.

In front of the Dome, we joined 20 other "LifeGaters" along with about 800 thousand of our closest friends, we laughed and fellowshipped as we cheered the team and Sean Peyton raising the Lombardi trophy. It was a neat moment. It was a new day.

The coverage for two weeks had been mostly fair but at times seemed to fall back into the predictable 9th Ward stories while ignoring the stories and struggles of New Orleans East, Gentilly, Lakeview, Slidell, South Louisiana, the Gulf Coast and thousands of other hard working, well deserving folks.

For years, media has unceremoniously been beating our brains out but the tide has changed.

One great story was Katie Couric's feature about Drew and Brittany Bree's immensely generous adoption of Samuel J. Green, a vibrant New Orleans Charter School, whose capable Principal, Ava Lee Moore, is one of the most faith filled Prayer Warriors you will ever meet. Ava is a dynamic example of a true faith walk person and when she appeared on the screen, Linda screamed, "There she is! Just look at her!" You go, girl!

To the skeptic grumps and frowning fuddy-duddies in the crowd, just let me say, it was more than a game. It is a fun example of how a tide can turn and I believe God is at work on many levels.

As the game got close to the end these words from John Hagee flashed in, "The game is prophetic. Revelation states that the Saints will ride from Heaven mounted on white horses (read Colts)!! Victory is coming!" . . . Then from Mark Chironna, "This is a win for the Real Saints in New Orleans, your city is earmarked for a visitation from Heaven, things are about to break wide open!"

And all the people said, Who Dat!!!

And to think, when it was 10-0, I was afraid that it was my fault. Realize, Jewish guilt and Italian guilt have nothing on Pentecostal guilt and I just knew I was the reason for the terrible start. These thoughts had been churning in me for the previous seven days. It had started innocently with an email.

My friend David Crosby is Pastor of the great First Baptist Church, who, in addition to being a gifted writer and master pulpiteer, is a man of faith and a friend I highly esteem. His email told me that one of the players (a FBC attendee) had joined with Drew Brees to make four SuperBowl tickets available for a special drawing with all proceeds going to the highly worthy Brees Foundation.

Knowing how much we could really use and enjoy those tickets and knowing that I was, in reality, helping Ava's school kids, I decided it was God's will for me to do my part.

I called David and asked if it was kosher to pray that I would win, to which he replied that it would help more if I prayed for him to win the drawing. I also immediately noticed, Baptists call it a drawing, Catholics call it a raffle.

My friend Michael also called and confided that he, too, had a pressing burden to help the Brees Foundation. The faith fever was spreading.

During the wait, I pronounced every Covenant Promise regarding God's good pleasure to bless His kids. My underground intercessions started slowly with the polite Evangelical, "If it be Your will", but then it quickly escalated into a "pedal to the floor" Prosperity posture, "Tickets cometh! These are my tickets, my name is on them, and they are coming to me, NOW".

At times I did wonder just how I would announce to the church that I won tickets in a raffle, make that a drawing. But it was not His will and some better Christian won them. As disappointment overwhelmed me, David asked me something about secret sin but I just ignored him. Truth was, I had bought a handful of raffle tickets and judgment was likely in my future.

My mind went wild as I could visualize Peyton Manning holding the trophy and saying, "New Orleans, this could've been yours but Michael but bought a raffle ticket!" In finest "Adam-esque" form, I was ready to say that it was David's fault.

But, as we all know, everything ended in fabulous fashion and, as victory came, I knew that I had been tenderly deemed "forgiven". Hallelujah!

For two weeks now, our oft bashed town has sparkled. Celebration has been orderly and fun with the exception of one idiot who busted off a few caps. No cars were burned. No store windows shattered. Just smiles, hugs and Who Dats abounding. We've all made each other proud.

Back in November at the Saints Hall of Fame festivities, I had reminded Mr. Benson and all the folks there to check out the Psalm 37 pronouncement, ". . . The Lord does not forsake His Saints . . ." Today, 31-17 makes that feel so right.

On many levels, our best days are ahead. God is up to something.

Believe Dat!

Michael

The LifeGate
