

Baltimore priest celebrates Mass for Jets players

Before the Baltimore Ravens faced the New York Jets Sept. 16, a Baltimore City priest celebrated Mass for the visiting team.

At the request of the National Football League's visiting team, Long Island native and lifelong Jets fan Father Joseph Del Vecchio, S.S.J., pastor of St. Peter Claver and St. Pius V, Baltimore, went to the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront to celebrate a 40-minute, 9 p.m. Mass for the Jets.

Despite the Josephite priest's support of the New York team, there was no divine providence for the Jets as the Ravens captured a 20-13 victory at M&T Bank Stadium.

"Apparently, it's something the teams do to try and get priests and ministers in the night before a game," said Father Del Vecchio. "The hotel called me. I'm not sure how my name came up."

The Mass was attended by about five players and two coaches, and Father Del Vecchio also heard confession for one of the team members.

"I took an altar server with me too, and he was really excited about meeting the players," Father Del Vecchio said. "I already had tickets to the game. So, it was a bonus when this came up."

It wasn't the first time he had catered to the spiritual needs of visiting professional football players.

When he was assigned to a parish in the nation's capital about 10 years ago, Father Del Vecchio celebrated a Mass for team members of the New England Patriots when they were in Washington, D.C. to play the Redskins.

"So, it's nothing abnormal," he said.