

# Seven fans, seven opinions on soccer's World Cup

**By Paul McMullen**

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It is buoyed by beauty, passion, tradition and hundreds of millions of followers whose devotion supersedes that of others.

Despite that universal appeal, it has been blemished by corruption and finger-pointing.

The Catholic Church?

Nah, the World Cup.

June 12 brings the 2014 edition of the quadrennial competition in the real football, what Americans call soccer.

Just as the Eucharist bonds the church, a love for the beautiful game will have a Tower of Babel in host Brazil and people around the world nodding in appreciation, whether your language is Portuguese, Igbo or Italian.

With that fervor in mind, the Catholic Review asked: After the United States, who are you rooting for in the World Cup? For most, heritage came into play.



*Pete Caringi Jr.*

Pete Caringi Jr., a Calvert Hall and UMBC grad who plays for Oklahoma City Energy in the U.S. Pro League, said he's rooting for Italy because "Growing up in an Italian family has been a big factor in my life. My favorite club team (AC Milan) is in Italy and I love their style of play."



*Gavin Barger*

Gavin Barger, a Loyola Blakefield junior and All-Metro player, cited his father's German background, and his mother's English roots: "I have always loved how hard-nosed and physical the Germans are. Some of my favorite players come out of England, David Beckham, Frank Lampard, John Terry and Steven Gerrard."



*Steve Nichols*

Steve Nichols, the new men's coach at Loyola University Maryland, similarly gave a nod to "Greece, because that's where my parents are from."

Rodnie Matute, a Harford County parishioner, was born in Honduras: "This is the second time in a row we have qualified, for a country that size (8 million), that's very exciting."

While it is a good bet that Pope Francis will be in front of a TV in Rome midnight June 15, when Argentina opens against Bosnia-Herzegovina, Father Augustine Inwang won't go near a screen the next afternoon, when Iran challenges his native Nigeria. "They break my heart," the pastor of Transfiguration Catholic Community said. "I will not watch, because I become panicky. My heart rate will go up."



*Rachel Bourne*

Mercy High grad and Mount St. Mary's goalie Rachel Bourne, meanwhile, appears loyal to her position, saying it "will be a big year of redemption for Italy. Goalie Gianluigi Buffon has had a great year."



### *Comboni Missionary Sister Mercedes Castillo*

Then there is the graciousness of Comboni Missionary Sister Mercedes Castillo, the new director of Hispanic Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, who grew up in Mexico. She remembers when it was host to the 1970 World Cup, a triumph for Brazil and Pelé, still the game's greatest ambassador.

There is considerable angst in Brazil, which has spent billions on unfinished stadiums amid violent protests of conditions in the favelas – and just as much anticipation, of a sixth World Cup championship for the only nation to win five.

With that high wire as a backdrop, Sister Mercedes cheers for Brazil, because of legends "like Pelé, Ronaldo, Romário, etc.," and because she would like its people to be included in the goal "of coming together as a community of faith."

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