

# Sundays aren't for football and other kids' games

It's 11:30 Sunday morning and I'm sitting in the bleachers at a high school football stadium in New Jersey, watching my 9-year-old grandson play football. My 4- and 6-year-old granddaughters are playing with the puppy at my feet.

It is 2018, a time when kids' sports are scheduled on God's day of worship and planned day of rest. When families should be taking their kids to church, instead they head to soccer, lacrosse, field hockey and football fields. And if they happened to attend an early Mass before the game, the kids aren't dressed in their "Sunday-best"; nope, they're donned in cleats and jerseys emblazoned with large white numbers silk-screened on the back - some even include their last names across the shoulders.

Remember our Sunday-best outfits? As children, we girls wore patent leather shoes, frilly party-type dresses with white gloves, clutched matching patent leather purses, and hats with ribbons snaking down our backs. Hats for women once were a requirement in Catholic churches - can you imagine that today?

Boys wore those comical clip-on ties, usually too short for their bodies, shiny dress shoes, white short-sleeve dress shirts - and hats *off*. (I never understood why females were required to wear hats, yet males were required to remove theirs.)

And instead of eating junky concession stand food, we were consuming the consecrated host - and don't you dare eat anything an hour before or after Mass.

Here in the football stadium, there's no praying going on, except maybe an occasional "Dear God, let me make a touchdown!" or "Please Lord, let the coach play my kid."

Instead of shaking hands with each other to pass along peace, parents and grandparents are high-fiving. Instead of hand bells ringing on the altar or in the bell tower, the referee is blowing a whistle. No gold chalice containing wine, but there's Gatorade in reusable plastic sports bottles.

I don't like it.

I think families' Sunday priorities need to be re-prioritized. It isn't the way I grew up. Sure, my three siblings and I participated in plenty of extracurricular activities: rec softball and baseball, baton-twirling, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and cheerleading.

*But not on Sundays.* Sundays meant church, pasta and meatballs, and taking a drive to visit *Nonna* or other *famiglia* – in that order.

At the risk of sounding like a curmudgeony 93-year-old, I just don't see how these kids, including my grandchildren, are going to learn the concept of Sunday worship enough to carry them through life – and have it stick. And I am not talking lacrosse stick.

Yea, yea, yea, yada, yada, yada, sports are super for kids to experience; they learn teamwork, skills, building character and that entire lingo. Yet so can experiencing church.

Who's setting up these rec council schedules anyway? Aren't *those people* spiritual? Didn't *they* grow up going to church with their parents and learning the significance of Sundays?

I say, take the kiddies to worship *first*, even if it means dragging them to the 8 a.m. Mass – in church clothes – and *then* change into uniform and go play sports ... if games must be played on Sundays at all.

Isn't that a WIN-WIN for all?