

Who Dats return home

By Catholic News Service

The lifelong black-and-gold vision hit me, finally, on Tuesday morning during Super Bowl XLIV media day at Sun Life Stadium.

As a cradle “Who Dat,” born, reared and eventually resettled in New Orleans, I scarcely could believe the work of folk art emerging from the green grass. There, in the north end zone, an NFL paint crew using spray guns drew the improbable vision for me in black capital letters, 20 feet tall: “SAINTS.”

After finishing the black letters, the artists then worked on filling in the negative space with gold paint. For me, the spray paint could have been 24-karat gold. The Technicolor picture – 10 by 53 and one-third yards – had a surreal, Dorothy-from-Kansas quality. The yellow brick road on the way to Oz never looked any better – especially in light of the Saints’ mesmerizing and emotionally uplifting 31-17 victory over the Colts in Super Bowl XLIV.

Anyone from New Orleans can tell you this year’s Super Bowl was never exclusively about football. Reflecting on those days in 2005 when a great American city went wet and dark, I can bring only two words to mind: horrors and heroes.

Katrina exposed to America’s eyes the searing poverty and human need that existed but had remained hidden in New Orleans for decades. Truth be told, every major American city has those disparities, but New Orleans has the location and the topography that allowed Katrina to blow open the lock to Pandora’s box.

Among the best two hours I spent immediately after the storm came at a seminar presented by experts on

traumatic stress. They predicted, with uncanny accuracy, the roller coaster of emotions that would hit everyone during the next few days, months and years.

“You will lose track of time, your decision-making will be jumbled, you will have difficulty remembering things,” one psychologist said. “You are not going crazy. This is a normal coping mechanism. You could have these up-and-down feelings for two to

we lived four blocks closer to the lake—I know that sounds counterintuitive—we would have been dry. That’s because New Orleans is built like a saucer, with the higher ground located nearest the Mississippi River and the lake.

I remember pulling our piano out of the house. I’m not that strong, but I did it by myself. The wood, under a caustic brew of salt water and God knows what for three weeks, simply pulled apart like cardboard. My wife was so

city on a hill.

That night, U2 and Green Day unveiled their pulsating song, “The Saints Are Coming.” Now, the Saints marched here, all the way to Super Bowl XLIV and an NFL championship.

Yes, tears are flowing like a river.

I am not trivializing people’s pain when I say the Saints contributed mightily to the region’s collective psychic recovery. In 2006, when thousands were living in FEMA trailers, the Saints sold out every seat in the Superdome. Many fans – living in their front yards, so close and yet so far from home, while they waited on insurance settlements and honest contractors—expressed the feeling that they considered supporting the Saints their civic duty.

Newly arrived coach Sean Payton and quarterback Drew Brees, a pair of out-of-towners, gave the Saints passion, purpose and swagger. They lifted hearts. They touched souls.

They painted the end zone.

Then they stepped back and allowed every “Who Dat” traumatized by water and wind to paint Bourbon Street black and gold.

The resurrection story has just begun.

“I have the feeling like it was all meant to be, it was all destined,” Brees, the Super Bowl MVP said while clutching the Vince Lombardi Trophy to his chest. “We knew we had the entire city, maybe the entire country behind us. It doesn’t get any better than that. The celebration is not going to end.”

The preceding is an editorial which appeared in the Feb. 13 issue of the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the New Orleans Archdiocese. It was written by Peter Finney Jr., executive editor and general manager.

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Our children’s pediatrician, his practice under water, committed suicide. Someone we know lost his house and nearly lost his life when he got into a confrontation with police, backing up his car in their direction to run them down. He begged the police to pull the trigger. He wanted out of his misery. Only because one of the officers knew him is he still alive. That was a Katrina miracle.

It’s funny how you remember things. Even without a measuring tape, I now know exactly how long four-and-a-half feet is: It is the distance from the ground to my chest. That was the water line in our house near Lake Pontchartrain. Had

traumatized she could not bring herself to return to the house. She finally was able to come and say her goodbyes the day before we sold it. She is a survivor, not a statistic.

While the government’s response was abysmal at all levels, the heroes came in droves. There were the church and volunteer groups arriving from across the country with hearts and hands and sweat to resuscitate a city on life support. Incredibly, they are still coming, performing miracles, one house at a time.

The Saints stayed, survived and thrived. When they made their emotional return to the restored Superdome on Sept. 25, 2006 – 13 months after Katrina – and defeated the Falcons on national television, the transformation of a city’s people from victims to survivors took another major step. The palace of pain – which sheltered 30,000 refugees after the storm and where 12 people died – had become the shining

For resolving conflict, Paul offers sound advice

This isn’t an apology for Rodney King’s tearful “Can’t we all just get along?” plea, but there has to be some degree of civility – or at least common ground rules – when it comes to differences among Catholics.

Nowhere was this more evident than earlier this month when Judie Brown of the American Life League accused John Carr, the executive director of the U.S. bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, of having ties to groups that support abortion.

“Our purpose is not to attack the bishops or all the good they do, but rather to expose a scandal that has to be addressed,” she wrote. “Please understand that we love the church and that love requires that we do all we can to protect her from evil.”

Needless to say, several bishops reacted in utter disbelief of the claims, calling them “totally ridiculous.” Several days later, a report was issued by a group called “Reform CCHD Now Coalition” in which the bishops were accused of harboring “in

From the Editor's corner

By Michael Brown

the highest places of power” within the conference those who promote abortion and homosexuality. The specific target of these allegations was the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

Almost immediately, there was widespread reaction around the country. In Idaho, one person immediately threatened to cease donations to the diocese, Catholic Charities of Idaho and even Catholic Relief Services.

After spending almost a week researching and formulating responses to each of this donor’s concerns, it dawned on me that the early church must have had similar issues. We have the benefit of two millennia of theological development, of growth, of error, of retrenchment and growth. The advantage of the early church

was that it had St. Paul, and who wouldn’t like some of his inspiration today?

I began to peek at First Corinthians to get some sense of how he managed conflict resolution.

“It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness. (1 Cor 4:4-5).

I read a little further and reached Paul’s almost poetic discourse on love: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all

things.” (13:4-7)

The commentator states that “This chapter, wonderfully significant when considered alone, is even more meaningful in its context.” The context is that it follows about 12 chapters of serious admonition by Paul over the ways the Corinthians are acting among themselves, toward other Christians, even slamming Paul himself.

My guess is that if Paul had possessed the tools of modern technology when he was writing this letter, he would not have posted it to the Internet or e-mailed it to thousands of people around the country.

In fact, when addressing the splintered allegiances of the Corinthians – some to Paul, others to Apollos and others to Cephas – Paul entirely reframes the issue: “I planted, Apollos

watered, but God gave the growth.” (3:6) The divisions they perceived were not true divisions, but merely the result of human failings, human stupidity.

That said, abortion and homosexual activity – including gay marriages – haven’t been approved by the U.S. bishops or anyone working for them. While technology has advanced, it hasn’t made humans any smarter. Are we really following Paul’s call to love when we are so willing to accuse others of being complicit with evil?

In Chapter 16, Paul urges the Corinthians to “be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” (16:13)

Sound advice.

Readers Write

Seeing health care as a life issue

Editor, the ICR:

In addressing the right to life issue, we have concentrated on abortion and euthanasia. We have failed to look at the whole issue.

If we cut Medicare, we will

be rationing health care to the elderly and those who need supplemental income. If we tax medical devices and eyewear, we will again implement rationing. In turn, we will actually be leading to the untimely deaths of many

in need. In other words, this would be a form of euthanasia. We need to look at these life issues as well as abortion and euthanasia.

Georgette Hansen
Kuna

LETTERS

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Please sign your letter and include your mailing address and a daytime telephone number where you can be reached for verification. Letters should be brief and in good taste.

The writer should include name, address and phone number.

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