

In Memory of Coach John Madden

Dear Friends,

Coach John Madden passed away on December 28, 2021, at the age of 85. He was a longtime member of our diocese, and over the years worshipped at our parishes in Pleasanton, Dublin and Danville. I celebrated his funeral Mass at Oakland's Cathedral of Christ the Light, and he is buried in the mausoleum underneath. Since "everybody knew John Madden" (I say with affection), I wanted to share with you all my homily given at his Requiem Mass.

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On February 14, there will be a celebration of John Madden's long life and many accomplishments at the Oakland Coliseum.

But today, at this Cathedral, we come to pray for John Madden, and to commend his soul into the arms of a loving and merciful God.

The excellent Fox Sports documentary on John Madden shown on Christmas Day recounted his outstanding public career: football player, coach, Super Bowl victor, TV personality, multiple Emmy Award winner, Hall of Fame inductee.

That program showed who John Madden was in the sight of the public.

Today, we remember who John Madden was in the sight of Almighty God: a son, husband, brother, father, grandfather and friend.

And MORE: He was a baptized Christian, which made him a Child of God, and an heir -- an inheritor -- of the Kingdom of Heaven. His sins were forgiven in the sacrament of Confession; He received Christ's own Body and Blood in the sacrament of Holy Communion; as a young teen the bishop confirmed him and bestowed on him the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then John Madden acted in his life with the graces he received in these Catholic sacraments. The sacraments put divine life in him; and he showed it - by living out the Beatitudes we just heard read.

I'll give you just one example (although there are many):

On August 12, 1978, at an exhibition game of the Raiders vs. the Patriots in the Oakland Coliseum, Patriots receiver Darryl Stingley was tackled, and hit so hard that he never walked again. His vertebrae were broken, and he was paralyzed for life from the neck down.

That night John Madden was at Stingley's bedside in Eden Hospital in Castro Valley. No one from the Patriots team was at the hospital. In fact, the Patriots were on their team plane, taxiing for takeoff from Oakland airport. John Madden got on the phone and made the plane turn around and come back to the gate. Madden insisted their coach attend to his injured player.

For the next weeks, although the Raiders were at training camp 1 1/2 hours north of here in Napa, John and his wife Virginia visited Darryl Stingley daily. They offered their home and the use of a car to Stingley's family. They bought clothes for Stingley's wife who had no time to pack as she rushed to a plane to fly west. After the 1978 league opener in Denver, John Madden flew home with the team to Oakland and went immediately to Stingley's bedside to visit.

Coach Madden remained a friend and made good on his promise to help Darryl for the rest of his life. "I love that man," Stingley wrote in his autobiography "Happy to be Alive" in 1983.

And we love you too, Coach Madden.

And so does the Lord. The Lord who created you, and redeemed you, and who said to you at the moment of your baptism, "You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

In Hebrew the root word for Victory is also the root word for Eternity.

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:57)

Coach, may you share in one last victory: the Victory of Christ. For eternity. In heaven.

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