

men@trinity

Newsletter

June 2007

Future events

Meal out 15th June

Fathers day service 17th June



It has been a long time coming, but more than two decades since God had a hand in a World Cup triumph, football is returning the favour. With heart on sleeve and slogan on chest, Kaká's postmatch celebration in Athens on Wednesday night thrust his faith into the spotlight. "I belong to Jesus," the statement said. Liverpool fans shuddered, undone by an ineligible deity.

As arguably the best player on earth, Kaká's high-profile commitment to his religion is good news for church leaders. In recent times, the Italian church's efforts to infiltrate the mainstream and spread the gospel have been much derided. When Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Pope Benedict's No 2, created The Clericus Cup this year, an international tournament for priests and seminarians, he spoke without irony of creating a Vatican City team to take on the likes of AC Milan in Serie A. However, even Bertone would not argue that the stated aim

of “reinvigorating a sporting tradition within the Christian community” is better served by Kaká and his T-shirt than kickarounds in cas-socks.

Kaká, who was born to a middle-class family in Brasilia, said that he became deeply religious when he was 12. “I learnt that it is faith that decides whether something will happen or not,” he said.

Some might consider that the Liverpool fans who “kept the faith” in the face of the most testing circumstances during the Champions League final two years ago actually endured a quasi-religious experience. Other similarities shared by football and religion are obvious – tribalism, sacrifice, conflict. However, few people remember that a third of the clubs that have played in the Premiership owe their existence to a church. Barnsley and Swindon Town were founded by clergymen, while Louis Rocca, the ice-cream baron who came up with the name “Manchester United”, set up a network of Catholic priests to scout for players.

Kaká’s own faith was strengthened in October 2000 when he slipped on a swimming pool slide and broke a vertebrae. “The doctors said that I was lucky to be able to walk normally,” he said. “They were talking about luck and my family was talking about God. We knew that it was His hand that had saved me.”

In terms of religious commitment, Kaká has been there, done it and bought the T-shirt. He wore his “I belong to Jesus” vest when Milan won Serie A in 2004 and has “God is faithful” stitched on to the tongues of his boots. An evangelical Christian, his influence was reflected by the febrile reaction to Middle Eastern reports last year that he had converted to Islam.

But with church attendances falling and religion a contentious issue, could Kaká’s faith actually put bums on pews? Monsignor Keith



If you have any articles you would like to contribute to men@trinity newsletter, please email to men@trinitymethodist.org.uk, or drop into pigeon hole B for the attention of Mike Bartrop.

Barltrop, director of the Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation, said: "A lot of people think religion is quite fundamentalist, so if there is a major sporting figure whose lifestyle backs up his words, it is a positive thing.

"It is not a question of getting people into church, but it is good to have positive role models. It is easy to be excited by pop stars and sporting celebrities, but you have to ask if that leads to a life of hedonism." A religious footballer is far from unique. Portsmouth's success this season may or may not have had anything to do with the prayer meetings attended by the likes of Kanu and Lomana LuaLua. Meanwhile, the organisation Score continues a 16-year battle to make chaplaincy available to the world of sport and 70 per cent of league clubs have a chaplain; tonight, at Huish Park, the Reverend Jim Pearce will lead prayers in the Vice-President's lounge before Yeovil Town's Coca-Cola League One play-offs final on Sunday.

"It's good to get out into the community," Rev Simon Stevenette, the vicar of Christ Church, Swindon, and the football club chaplain, said. As for Kaká's show of faith, he believes it can help the church's cause. "I've got five football-mad boys and when they saw Brazil praying at the World Cup, they were all talking about it at breakfast," he said. "It sparks debate."

It can also spark a comeback if Marvin Andrews is to be believed. Having injured his cruciate ligament in March 2005, the then Rangers defender was ruled out for the season. Andrews said that God would keep him fit and made a speedy recovery that baffled doctors. The flipside to such tales is the sectarian bigotry that blights football in Glasgow, where Andrews was plying his trade.

But if the Hand of God Church in Rosario, Argentina, with its commandment to name all first sons Diego, seems extreme, the deification of Kaká may be more useful to religious leaders seeking to attract football's youth. "We can only win being on Jesus's side," Kaká said. This year, anyway.

From The Times May 25, 2007

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/football/european_football/article1838356.ece



FROM THE POTTING SHED

Greetings!

Flaming June or so they say; well let's hope they're right this year. At least we needed the rain in May so mustn't grumble. Now it's the long light evenings sitting in the garden enjoying the start of soft fruit season; and other home grown produce. Of course it's also the time to plant up baskets and containers and plant out summer bedding schemes.

Plants of Interest

This is the month for a lot of deciduous shrubs to flower, especially some with wonderful scent. Philadelphus or mock orange, Choisya, Deutzia, Lilacs, Weigela, summer flowering Viburnum, and Buddleia globosa all flower. Roses come into their own and provide colour and perfume. Many will flower again except for the older types and some species roses.

In the borders herbaceous perennials such as geraniums, red-hot poker, day-lilies, Iris, Aquilegias, Delphiniums, foxgloves, lupins and Campanulas provide a mass of colour. Alpines are still showing well and climbers such as early sown sweet peas and summer flowering Clematis start to flower.

Many will provide colour for weeks, so plant a good variety to get as long a season as possible.

God bless and happy gardening.

