

## Second-Hand Victory

The children of San Gregorio and Buena Vista, impoverished villages in Nicaragua, are celebrating New England's Super Bowl perfect season. All over town one sees youngster's clad in commemorative Patriots caps and jerseys emblazoned with the legend, "Super Bowl Champions, 19-0."

Seems the NFL churned out nearly three hundred of these souveniere garments. Stadium gift shops stocked their shelves, poised to cash in the instant the final whistle sounded. When the Pats blotted their escutcheon with a 17-14 loss to New York the league donated all the merchandise to the deserving poor. And of course nobody in these soccer-obsessed South American towns knows or cares about the historical discrepancy. If you dress in rags and somebody gives you a free shirt, you wear it with gratitude.

Unintentional charity from an unrealized championship sheds the discredited outfits of defrocked champions. They were naked and America clothed them with the cast-off vestments of an epic-making oops.

All of this makes me rejoice that my custom-cut commemorative garment awaits a victory that knows no doubt. Revelation 7.9 describes a ransomed church rallied 'round the throne like fans on the field to watch the awarding of the Lombardi trophy. Each member is swathed in the white robe of Christ's undefeated righteousness. The Patriots shocked the nation by a win that never came. Jesus stunned the world with a victory no one foresaw. They downloaded clothing to downplay defeat. Christ lavishes raiment that shouts his triumph.

There are, however, some parallels.

Just like the Patriots' game-gear, Jesus shares his wardrobe with the poor and the foreigner. John sees a crowd from every nation, tongue and tribe all dressed in the uniform of the day. And just like the Patriots' hats and shirts, these robes and crowns come to us from someone else's victory. We have a stake in a battle we could never have won but did not have to fight.

Unlike the New England threads, though, this is not the unintended largess of red-faced defeat but the sovereign will of a salvation older than eternity past. And unlike earthly clothes that fall apart almost as fast as the Giants' victory will be forgotten, these remain forever to the praise of an unfading triumph.

The children of Nicaragua "did not expect such a surprise," said a spokeswoman from World Vision. "Neither did the Patriots," quipped the Associated Press. And the sinners of humanity did not expect such a blessing. Neither did the defeated forces of Hell.

Suit Up!  
Doug