News



Sr. Maureen Kehoe, who was once a cheerleader in junior high school, leads her fellow Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, in a "C-H-I-E-F-S" cheer Feb. 2 while they rewatch the Jan. 29 AFC Championship game on YouTube. The Kansas City Chiefs beat the San Francisco 49ers 31–20 to go to the Feb. 12 Super Bowl, in which they will play the Philadelphia Eagles. (OSV News photo/The Leaven/Jay Soldner)

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Gathered for a pregame huddle in Ross Hall at their motherhouse, a spirited group of Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth enthusiastically shared advice and encouragement in advance of the big Super Bowl game Feb. 12 pitting the hometown favorite Kansas City Chiefs against the Philadelphia Eagles at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona.

These women know their football — and related sports trivia. To Andy Reid, Chiefs head coach, Sr. Paula Rose Jauernig had this to say: "Say your prayers. Eat your cheeseburger for lunch. Keep your team together!"

Sr. Mary Laura Huddleston's message to the Chiefs was even more succinct: "I'll pray. You play."

But Sr. Maureen Kehoe thought a little help from the booth was in order — a very, very high booth.

"OK, Lord," she prayed, "have the Holy Spirit tell the Chiefs what to do."

Taking a more pragmatic approach, Sr. Gloria Solomon advised, "Hold on to the ball," and Sr. Mary Jo McDonald said, "Stay safe."

Far from being a pregame prayer service, the interview with these Sisters of Charity by The Leaven, Kansas City's archdiocesan newspaper, was a rip-roaring experience. They tossed inflated footballs, wore their Chiefs apparel and expressed their opinions freely. Five or six of the participants are Kansas City area natives; at one time or another, all served ministries in the metropolitan area — aka Chiefs Kingdom.

Two of the sisters who had lived in Denver confessed they finally converted from their Bronco fever to Chiefs' fandom. Upon relocating to the Leavenworth motherhouse, Sr. Marie Michael Mollis recalls the not-too-friendly looks she received

when she mistakenly wore her Broncos shirt to a televised game played against the Chiefs. She learned her lesson and converted a few years later. (But she's holding on to her Broncos shirt, just in case.)

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Whether the sisters hail from Colorado, Montana, Wyoming or the Midwest, their loyalties tend to run Chiefs red, especially leading up to Super Bowl Sunday. They want the Chiefs to win, but the sisters are aware that the final score predictions point to a close game.

They were fearful that the Philadelphia Eagles will "go after" Patrick Mahomes, K.C.'s legendary quarterback, but they know the Chiefs are preparing for this, and "Mahomes is smart," Jauernig said.

The sisters would like to see Donna Kelce toss the coin to identify which team gets to choose whether to kick or receive the opening kickoff. Her two sons are on opposing Super Bowl teams: Travis is a tight end for Chiefs, and Jason plays center for the Eagles.

What the sisters would really, really like is a future visit by Mahomes and/or Travis Kelce to the motherhouse and the Ross Hall skilled nursing facility.

Sr. Delia Lawless admires kicker Harrison Butker, whose field goal clinched the AFC Championship for the Chiefs. She's also amazed at how the players barrel up and through the middle on handoffs from the quarterback.

Jauernig hopes the Chiefs make a long run back from the end zone to spice up the Super Bowl. If the Chiefs get way out front in scoring, Sr. Sue Retherford hopes Reid will give other players the chance to experience the big game.

The sisters interviewed were unanimously excited about the Super Bowl. Asked what they normally do during a game, the women religious said they cheer, enjoy snacks and pray. Some pace the floor nervously or leave the room when the tension mounts.

The interview closed with Kehoe dusting off her junior high cheerleading skills and leading the group in a rousing show of support for the Chiefs.

After all, the sisters live by the mantra expressed over a century ago by their founder, who encouraged, "Look forward to the good that is yet to be."

With that sage advice, hope springs eternal among these Sisters of Charity for a Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl victory.

Read this next: St. Francis sisters are among the Eagles fans bringing faith to the field for the Super Bowl