

As many of you know, Notre Dame football has played well this year. They are 12-0 and in the playoffs for the first time in the school's history. They play Clemson on Saturday, December 29.

Earlier this week Garth Brooks had a concert in Notre Dame stadium. It was raining during the concert, which gave a whole new meaning to his hit song, "Ain't Goin' Down (til the sun comes up)."

Notre Dame recently expanded its stadium by putting beautiful press boxes on three sides of the stadium. One side, however, did not get a press box. They wouldn't dare block the view to the "Word of Life" mural on the side of the library that overlooks the stadium.

The mural is commonly known as "Touchdown Jesus," as it depicts Christ with arms raised high and surrounded by His apostles and some of the Church's greatest theologians (e.g., Sts. Jerome, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, etc.). More worldly minds believe that Jesus has His arms in the air celebrating Notre Dame touchdowns with great joy.

Today's celebration of the Immaculate Conception reminds us that Mary, (who is grace perfected) is the goal, the target, and to put it in sports terms, the "end zone" of life. When you know the goal, by God's grace, and help from friends/loved ones, you can make your way there.

In life, sometimes we pick up a lot of yards – a good day, week, month, or year. Other times we fumble, get sacked – (hurt by those we love, lose a job, get sick, commit sins), and when this happens, we are tempted to become discouraged and lose hope.

Today's celebration reminds us that Mary doesn't just cheer us on, but as mom, she blocks for us (protects us), helping us break through a hole to get closer to the goal line. Sometimes she refreshes us with Gatorade (her motherly love) when our legs get weary from running or our hearts get weary from loving. And honestly, if things look terribly bleak (no hope), we have to launch a Hail Mary pass. Somehow, she brings it in with a catch. She does for us what we cannot do on our own – wins great graces from her Son.

Regardless of where you are today, know you can turn to Mary! We can look to her and say, "Mother. Give us hope. Comfort us. Encourage us. Ask Jesus to do in us what He did in you. Help us reach the end zone, heaven itself, where your Son stands with arms raised high victorious over sin and death. Blessed Mother, what thou the odds be great or small, pray for us and help us with Christ to win over all!"