Holiness. What is holiness? It is a name often used for churches. It is a title given to some clergy in certain denominations. It is a respectful word used when addressing certain religious leaders. It is a term tagged to some evangelical movements. The word “holy” gets used for a variety of things also, like music albums, television episodes, short stories and secular songs. Wikipedia describes holiness as “the state of being holy or sacred. Holiness is being clean or pure, to be holy is to be like God.” But have you ever heard of the word holy being used for a sports event?

The first reference to something being “holy” in the Bible is the Sabbath. Genesis 2:3 says, “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (made it holy), because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (NKJV). Later we find references to Moses standing on “holy ground” before a burning bush (Exodus 3:5), a “holy place” in the sanctuary (Exodus 26:33), and even the nation of Israel is described as holy (Exodus 19:6).

In the United States one of the greatest sports events is called the “Super Bowl.” It’s the championship game of the NFL (National Football League) and is considered de facto as a national holiday. Only Thanksgiving beats this as the largest day for U. S. food consumption. It’s not only one of the most-watched sporting events in the nation, but also in the world. Commercial airtime costs are the highest in the year on this day since around 100,000,000 people watch the event. This year’s event, Super Bowl XLVI will take place on February 5, 2012 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana. Many news items on the web speak of Super Bowl as a “Holy Super Bowl Sunday” or “the high holy day of sports.”

“Certainly in much of American society, our gods include professional athletes. And if the Zeus of American sports gods are NFL football players, our high holy day is Super Bowl Sunday.” Some churches cancel services so members can put all their attention on the event. Others have special services at other times. Big screen TVs and food are opened in some fellowship halls. One church in Indiana is having an auction to raise money for their parish by selling a package of weekend fun which includes tickets to the Super Bowl.

So, what does all of this have to do with holiness? Not much. Holiness does not come from worshiping sports superstars. It comes from comparing oneself with God. Like Peter, who suddenly saw himself in the presence of Jesus (Luke 5:1-11), we will fall down in humility and adoration when we encounter true holiness.

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1. Wikipedia: Holiness
2. WBEZ Story
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Thanks so much,

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