

Soccer Legend Says ‘Hand of God’ Brought Argentina Pope

The same “**hand of God**” brought the papacy to Argentina as helped it to win the 1986 World Cup, says **Diego Maradona**, the **soccer** legend whose famously illicit, handled goal against England still excites passions at home and abroad.

In a letter to Rome’s *Il Messaggero* newspaper on Wednesday from his base in Dubai, Maradona, 52, described himself as a devout **Roman Catholic** and said he rejoiced at the election of his compatriot Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as **Pope Francis**.

“I am truly very happy and I am certain that my enthusiasm is shared by the whole Argentinian people,” he wrote.

“Everybody in **Argentina** can remember ‘the hand of God’ in the England match in the 1986 World Cup. Now, in my country, the ‘hand of God’ has brought us an Argentinian pope.”

In a quarter-final tie in 1986, Maradona eliminated England with two goals, one a brilliant solo run through the defense, the other a handball that the referee mistook for a header.

He said afterwards that the goal was scored “a little with the head of Maradona, a little with the hand of God”.

That remark still rankles in **England**, where the top-selling *Sun* newspaper’s splash on the Argentinian pope showed Francis raising his arm in benediction with the headline: “Hand of God.”

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