News



New York Knicks forward Og Anunoby and San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama battle for the ball during Game 1 of the 2026 NBA Finals in San Antonio June 3. (OSV News/Eric Gay-Pool Photo via Imagn Images via Reuters)



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As celebrations erupted in New York after the Knicks won Game 1 of the NBA Finals, beating the San Antonio Spurs, 23-year-old Knicks fan MD Hossain grabbed a microphone and chanted, "My mayor Muslim, my bagel Jewish, my Christian Dior, Knicks in four."

The NBA Finals is played as a best of seven series — four wins would clinch a series sweep and New York's first men's basketball championship in 53 years.

Hossain's interreligious refrain became an overnight sensation, going viral, across New York, the world, and in every corner of social media.

The Knicks fan was quickly interviewed by The Washington Post, The New York Times and CNN. In each appearance, Hossain has pointed out that New York City and the game of basketball are defined by the blending of many cultures and religions, all of whom are putting aside what makes them different to celebrate their team. The chant brought a palpable sense of unity and joy that could be felt in the New York metropolitan area — and beyond.

There was just one problem — the Knicks lost Game 3, and "Knicks in Four" became "Knicks in Five." Hossain and the Knicks would need a new rhyme.

After the Knicks pulled off a historic 29-point comeback to improbably (some say miraculously) win Game 4, Hossain was found by media once again on the streets celebrating — and ready with an updated chant.

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"My mayor still Muslim, my bagel still Jewish, the pope on our side, Knicks in five!"

Though Pope Leo XIV hasn't explicitly declared his Knicks fandom, Hossain might have a point.

It started when Knicks superfan and award-winning director Spike Lee met with Leo during a papal audience with film directors and actors back in November.

During the audience, Lee asked the pontiff to sign a specialty Knicks jersey with the name "Pope Leo" on the back over the number 14. Lee has been seen wearing it throughout the playoffs, including during the Knicks' miracle Game 4 win.

Why the Leo jersey when Leo himself is from Chicago? The current lineup of the Knicks is led by three former Villanova University stars: Mikal Bridges, Jalen Brunson and Josh Hart. Leo also famously attended the university.




For Knicks fans, a signed jersey and the Villanova connection would probably have been enough to justify the assertion that the pope was on their side. But their convictions became absolute after yet another viral video hit social media days before the NBA Finals took off.

In the video, Knicks fan Robbie DeLasho recorded himself in St. Peter's Square, and as the popemobile was passing, he shouted "Pope Leo, go Knicks" repeatedly until he could get the pontiff's attention.

Leo, waving to the crowd, appears to make eye contact with DeLasho, giving him a double thumbs up.

A papal thumbs-up to a "Go Knicks" chant might seem like flimsy proof of Leo's support. But during this finals run, Knicks fans will take anything they can get.

After losing Game 3 — President Donald Trump was in Madison Square Garden, the guest of Knicks owner James Dolan — Knicks fans were seen burning sage in front of New York's home court in an effort to "cleanse" the memory of the previous night's loss. And on Wednesday morning, St. Joseph Sr. Marie Mackey, located in Brentwood, Long Island, made the trek to Madison Square Garden armed with holy water to bless the arena.

Is it a coincidence that the Knicks happened to complete the biggest comeback in a single game in NBA Finals history that evening, taking a commanding 3-1 series lead? Not to Knicks fans.

"The holy water worked!" commented a social media user.

But the Knicks are not the only ones who believe they have a little divine intervention on their side.



Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco bless Luke Kornet of the San Antonio Spurs before the Spurs’ playoff win against the Oklahoma City Thunder May 24, 2026. (Courtesy of salesiansisterswest.org)

As fans tuned in for the finals, they were quick to notice some prominent figures in white cheering from the bleachers, the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco, otherwise known as the Spurs Nuns. The sisters have a long history as fans of the San Antonio team.

During this year's championship, videos have quickly spread across social media of the sisters shooting hoops in a pickup game, piling into a van on their way to a game, and praying for Spurs' star Victor Wembanyama.

The provincial house is lively in the evenings during basketball season as the sisters watch the game and pray over the players. The sisters have remained devoted to the team, from their worst stretch of seasons to this year's championship.

"The spurs will win because they have god on their side," a user named "blue" commented on a TikTok of the sisters.

"Blessed is your jump-shot. May the Lord guide your free throw and forgive your fouls," a user named Chris commented under a TikTok of the sisters blessing Luke Kornet.

**Related:** The superfans known as the 'Spurs Nuns' aim to bring divine intervention to the NBA Finals

With a Finals win, the Spurs could cap off a magical season, one that has seen the continued rise of 2023-24 Rookie of the Year Wembanyama as an NBA superstar. A Knicks win would secure their first championship since 1973 after decades of losing.

With stakes like these, it's no wonder that fans from both teams are looking for the backing of the Almighty.

In the closing seconds of Game 4, as the Spurs had 1.2 seconds left to potentially win the game and squash the ferocious New York comeback, commentator and Knicks fan Stephen A. Smith couldn't even watch.

"The last shot ... I did not see it. I actually prayed. I actually bowed my head. I did not watch it."

With margins like these — three of the four games have been decided by fewer than 4 points each — perhaps all that fans can do is pray. Some time in the next couple of days, one fan base is going to believe with absolute certainty that their prayers have been answered.