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New York Times spotlights priest who loved sports

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

Over at the Catholic-friendly *New York Times*, there's a heartwarming story about a priest, Fr. John Flynn, who died last year. It's a good read. Here's an excerpt:

In the final years of his life, when his memory was fading but his strength remained solid, the Rev. John C. Flynn paced the halls of a Bronx nursing home, talking with the lonely, smiling to all -- and swinging an imaginary golf club.

Father Flynn was nuts about sports. Through willpower, practice and hope -- something of which he was in no short supply --he transformed himself from an asthmatic youngster into an athletic young man. Hockey, tennis, skiing, football or basketball, he loved them all. "The nurses thought he was crazy," recalled his sister, Mary Ellen Loveless. "He was not. He just was practicing his swing, pretending to hit the ball!" ...

Father Flynn died last year, after 83 years of a life well-lived. And now, decades after he left Parkchester, he has returned -- to the "Rev. John C. Flynn Rooftop Court" at St. Raymond Academy for Girls, where he once was a guidance counselor. It's a simple space, fittingly, and just a half-court, actually, since boxy air-conditioning units had already taken up a good part of the roof.

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