



Issue No. 1: September 27, 2020

**What:** Weekly Catholic Athletes for Christ message

**Why:** To keep our faith & athletics intersected

**Who:** Any member of any sports team in our Catholic High Schools across the Diocese

**From:** Fr. Zach Edgar, Diocesan CAC Chaplain

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*Rather listen than read?*

- audio available at: <https://tinyurl.com/CAC20-CR1>

## **GREETINGS, RAIDERS!**

While we're dealing with modified sports seasons & regulations this year, I would like to try to do something small each week to help you stay plugged into your faith. I know I like audio more than reading, so feel freed to download my brief chat this week from my Catholic Radio SoundCloud, if you'd rather listen vs. read. The link for that is above and also in the email I sent your school admins. I have one real goal in this: to stay focused on **living concrete virtues in your day-to-day life** and using the upcoming Sunday readings as a roadmap to do it. I also like puns, hence, "Cross-Road" as we try to keep our athletic endeavors intersecting with and rooted in our Catholic faith. Since Mass is the most amazing and important thing we can participate in this side of heaven, I'm hoping a few one-liners from the coming Sunday readings help you pray better when you're at Mass on Sunday.

**First, let's pray for all those effected by the pandemic:**

O God, protector of all who hope in you, bless your people, keep them safe, defend them, prepare them, that, free from sin and safe from the enemy, they may persevere always in your love. Amen.

**This Sunday is:** 26th in Ordinary Time

**Our focus is on:** the spiritual qualities of **Conversion & Surrender**

**This Sunday, we hear a call to convert.**

A lot of times we are resistant to change. "I've always done it this way," can be a real enemy of necessary spiritual growth. How many times in our past have we not listened to our parents, teachers, bosses, or coaches, because we think we know better and don't really need to change?

My high school baseball coach had a great line about having life-experience: it was, "Hey, I've been 17 before, you haven't been 42," which was a creative way of getting stubborn high school athletes to pay more attention to the "why" of the things he would talk about. If we're going to trust and "buy-in" we naturally want to know "why?"

When we're hesitant to change, we sound a lot like the line we'll hear in Sunday's first reading from Chapter 18 of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel "You say, 'the Lord's way is not fair!'" How many times have we been needlessly upset about something because we misinterpreted the intention of what somebody did or said? We thought we knew the whole story, but we didn't. Maybe we took something too personally that somebody we look up to said to correct us. Whatever the scenario is, there are many times our personal sense of justice has little to do with what God already knows to be right and just.

We can't operate only on impulsive, sometimes heated emotions and call ourselves Christians. We need the grace of **conversion** to see things as God sees them, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We have to **surrender** our pride and various other obstacles before we become moldable, coachable, and capable of change. That's the simple beauty of the freedom we receive in the Sacrament of Confession. But we have to be willing to name and let go of - surrender - all that keeps us from the change of heart and mind that we need. Above all, we can't afford to let our lack of trust from our past keep us from the change and conversion that the Lord wants for us here and now.

If we only see ourselves as just "fine the way we are" or "good enough" it is not possible to grow in the spiritual life and to let the Lord change us into the saint he created each one of us to be. If we want

to get better at something, we have to practice, we have to keep trying, not being content with just “getting by,” but being set on fire with a real zeal and motivation to change for the better.

In Sunday’s Gospel (Mt 21:28-32) we’ll hear the parable of two sons, one who gave his word he would do something, but then didn’t follow through, and another who said he wouldn’t volunteer to help out but then had a change of heart and ended up helping anyway. Which one really did the will of their father? Clearly its the one who had a change of heart. Being coachable in the spiritual life means we are willing to adapt and change to try something new and better - with the help of others who have our best interest at heart.

That will be the premise of these sound bytes on the upcoming Sunday readings: How can we listen and let God’s word change us and not simply act as if we’ve heard it all before and so don’t pay attention to the message or the messenger? To change, to convert, to surrender our past mistakes to God, we have to be tuned-into ourselves and those around us - ***we have to listen to have a chance.*** Being spiritually deaf or stubborn is a dead end. My coach would call this attitude the TUC (tuck) rule. “T. U. C.” which stood for “Totally Un-Coachable.”

Experience or not, we’ll never have it ***all*** figured out, but God does give us mentors and coaches in life and certainly in the spiritual life in the Church to help challenge us to grow and heal in ways we probably never thought possible. Conversion and change of any kind will come with growing pains, but what we gain in growth in virtue and discipline is absolutely worth the sacrifice of simply admitting that we don’t have it all figured out and the conversion God desires is worth our effort.

Let the words of St. Paul to the Philippians in Sunday’s 2<sup>nd</sup> reading serve as the road-map for why we’re doing what we’re doing in trying to live out the life of grace:

*Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.* (Phil 2:3-4)

Sounds like being a team-player within the Church: it’s never ***just*** about us. So how do we practically live that? Every day in our prayer, sincerely ask Jesus to hear His voice, the voice of the one who shepherds us and leads us, so that we regularly ***tell him*** that we really do want to know Him and ***follow*** Him - not straying off on our own way, but letting our ways be totally ***converted*** into His Way. *Lord, bend my heart to do Your will!* (Ps. 119:36a)

### **Further reading:**

Catechism paragraph #2842: It is impossible to keep the Lord’s commandment of love and forgiveness simply by imitating the divine model from the outside; there must be a vital participation in Christ that proceeds from the heart. Only the Spirit can give us the mind “which was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2.5), so that we can forgive one another, as God in Christ has forgiven us (Eph 4.32).

### **Resolution:**

Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit to help you see where you need conversion and what you need to let go of/surrender. Resolve to apologize if you ought to. To go to confession if you need to. To **acknowledge** any prayer intentions or frustrations you are holding onto, for yourself and for others - especially your teammates and coaches - and **surrender** all that to God in a few minutes of silence. If it is helpful to do so, journal about it.

Finally, the next time you have 3 minutes, ask the Blessed Mother for spiritual protection. Think of 10 people that you know need prayers right now or that you’ve struggled with, and pray just one decade of the Rosary, and on those 10 Hail Mary’s in a row, think of a different person to pray for during each Hail Mary. May Our Mother of Divine Hope and Our Lady of Victories walk with you (and she will if you let her, just ask) through all the conversions of your life, great and small.

Let us pray for each other. Amen!

Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!  
St. Anthony of Padua, pray for us!  
St. Francis Solanus, pray for us!

St. Peter, pray for us!  
St. Dominic, pray for us!  
St. Rose of Lima, pray for us!