



Issue No. 3: October 11, 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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GREETINGS, RAIDERS!

I hope what I've sent to you so far is helping you pray during the week and gives you something to think about as you hear the readings at Mass on Sunday. If there's a way these can be more helpful, please know your feedback is always welcome. Your administrators and CAC moderators are in weekly contact with me, so just reach out to them. Say a *Hail, Mary* for me too, please. Thanks!

Since October 7th was the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary, let's pray the prayer that was revealed at Fatima just over 100 years ago & was asked by Mary to be added at the end of each decade of the Rosary:

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven; especially those in most need of Thy Mercy. Amen.

This Sunday is: 28th in Ordinary Time
Our focus is on: the virtue of mercy
Listen to this invitation on how to let go of our anger.

It's easy for all of us to all-to-quickly bring to mind people in our lives that have been difficult to forgive. We know there **is** such a thing as "righteous anger" that is justified and doesn't devolve into rage or bitterness. Staying in "that lane" however, can be very difficult - proof positive that we need God's grace to do it!

The last line of this Sunday's Gospel is "*many are invited but few are chosen.*" **Everybody** is invited to God's mercy and forgiveness, but few are accepting this great gift. "*Many are invited*" - what if the Lord came and spoke directly in our midst, stood right in front of us as he did for the pharisees and scribes so many times and said, "here's how to get to heaven and be united with God forever" and most people say "nah" or "don't tell me what to do!" In the Gospel, we will hear a King inviting guests to a banquet. This represents God inviting us into His Kingdom of heaven. Those invited either ignore the invite or maliciously attack the king's representatives who are doing the inviting: "*Tell those invited: 'Behold, I have prepared my banquet...and everything is ready; come to the feast.'*" *Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.*

Most reasonable people don't reject good things. So where is the disconnect? Why do we not constantly see heaven as the best thing ever, and pour all our energy into getting there? St. Paul had this type of profound conversion – that nothing else ultimately matters before sharing Christ with others – and we all will have to come to that realization sooner or later.

Though difficult, it is good to imagine ourselves in the Gospel this week as one of the invited guests who has ignored God who invites us to receive every good gift from Him – because we've all done this before. When we choose serious sin, it causes spiritual death. Anger and grudges and any type of pride kill our soul very quickly. We need to get to the "E.R.", **to confession**, immediately, and get those spiritual toxins out of our system, A.S.A.P. Jesus has the medicine and can bring us back to life. Just ask for His Mercy. He really is waiting for **you**. If God feels far away, ask yourself, "What are the things I'm chasing after to try to feel happy? Achievements? Being noticed? Seeking others' approval?" I want to simply and boldly tell you that true, lasting happiness is not possible without prayer. Specifically, quiet prayer, preferably in Church before Jesus in the tabernacle, where we ask for help to listen to God in silence.

Real help and change start with **asking** God **every day** to be in the middle of our mess, as it's impossible to do good apart from Him, most notably in difficult circumstances. St. Paul, as we'll hear this Sunday, is the perfect example of knowing where help and strength come from... in Sunday's 2nd reading we hear one of his

most quoted lines: “***I can do all things in him who strengthens me.***” But did you know that St. Paul wrote that **from a prison cell** in Ephesus! A lot of us would get stuck in a woe-is-me attitude if we were in St. Paul’s situation, but he lets Jesus transform and use his suffering, his daily Cross into something good for others.

How do we stay ***balanced*** like St. Paul in situations that could easily bring the worst out of us? On an even smaller scale, how do you handle personal failure? With hope for next time or with anger and self-hatred? Praying after failures and processing them is humbling. Don’t be afraid to ask God to give His strength to you. Once you get better at listening, the switch will flip, and you’ll see He has everything that you need. ***Lord, I need you – every hour, every moment, I need you!***

Hope for the future is the difference-maker in learning to embrace God’s mercy, and un-learning how to ignore and reject it. It’s a process. Don’t give up! Just like in sports, if we want something bad enough, we will have to sacrifice and let go of whatever is preventing us from getting to that next level of growth.

To grow spiritually, everybody has to have their “Exodus” experience. We can feel lost like we’re wandering in the desert. This is what happens when we go our own way. We go days -or much longer periods- without asking God’s help for even the simplest things, and all the while He is trying to guide us toward Himself and to heaven - the true Promised Land. We have to let go of anger and grudges and our poor sense of justice that keep us from forgiving as God forgives us. We have to die to that - so that God can bring us from spiritual death in our own personal desert to new life in “the ocean” of His Mercy. Learning how to forgive is part of daily choosing to be His disciple. We can’t do that if we just keep doing “business as usual.” Jesus can and will show us what we need to let go of, but we have to give time in quiet prayer to **listen** and be shown the best path that leads to Him and to forgiveness; so that next time we don’t so quickly throw away our [His] peace.

Many times in coaching, you have to let some athletes learn the lesson of listening “the hard way.” Whether it’s working on our endurance, or mechanics, a drill, or anything in athletics where a second set of eyes (that aren’t yours) is extremely helpful, **you have to decide who’s going to be in charge...** does it always have to be ***me***? Sometimes we can ignore our coaches because we’re not good at listening to any side but ours. It’s the same thing with knowing and loving God. Learning to follow somebody else’s will, and not just your own, is something God gives us plenty of opportunity to ***practice***. You get to decide if you’re going to “go hard” at practice or not. Most progress doesn’t happen overnight. Both the Lord and our coaches can only mold us to the degree that we let them. Thankfully, God is patient and merciful with us! Hopefully the other authority figures in your life are too! **Discipline is necessary to get better at anything.** The very well-known Psalm 23 that we’ll pray this weekend reminds us that God is always with us: *Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage...* but the rod and the staff are **discipline**... the shepherd needs them to keep the sheep together. So, do I let the Lord shepherd me? Or, more strongly worded, if you go back 1600 years to St. Jerome’s original translation of Psalm 23, does the Lord ***rule*** me? Ask Him to! ***Jesus, be the King and center of all that I am!***

Further reading:

Catechism paragraph #1460: The penance imposed by the confessor is an integral aspect of the sacrament of confession or reconciliation. The penance can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and the patient acceptance of one’s crosses. The Council of Trent taught that “the satisfaction [penance] that we make for our sins, however, is not so much ours as though it were not done through Jesus Christ. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with cooperation of ‘him who strengthens’ us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ... in whom we make satisfaction by bringing forth ‘fruits that befit repentance (Lk 3.8)’ These fruits have their efficacy from him, by him they are offered to the Father, and through him they are accepted by the Father.”

Resolution:

Make time to pray every day for the next 7 days at a time you wouldn’t normally pray. Choose any length of time that suits you, set an alarm in your phone, and stick to it. Make sure a part of it is silent prayer after telling God you are willing to listen. Ask Him whatever you’d like. He always wants to hear from us. It never gets old for Him. Second, make a resolution to get to confession. Pick the day and stick to it, or just ask a priest you know anytime. 99% they will say yes on the spot! You won’t regret this. The freedom it brings isn’t found anywhere apart from Jesus and His Mercy. Let us pray for each other. Amen!

Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!