

As Catholics, It's Time to Choose Up Sides

It's a great time of year to be a sports fan in Maryland. The Orioles have been leading the American League East most of this young season and playing a brand of baseball that hasn't been seen in Charm City since a certain player who wore number 8 was in his prime. In horse racing, the 3-year-old colt I'll Have Another has racing fans thinking of possibly the first Triple Crown in 34 years, following his win at the Kentucky Derby with a heart-stopping romp down the home stretch to win by a nose in The Preakness. In lacrosse, the University of Maryland and Loyola University represented our state in the NCAA national championship game on Memorial Day, with Loyola winning 9-3 to claim its first Division I national title.

All of this exciting activity in the world of sports has me thinking lately about the importance of being on, and committing to, a team. In all the examples above - even horse racing - it takes a committed group of people who believe in an effort or cause and who commit to it without wavering to achieve success. If some on a team are pulling in one direction and some in the other, that team is not going to reach its potential.

Pope Benedict XVI recently told the College of Cardinals: "We are on the Lord's team, the winning team." He continued that in the midst of battle, it is important to have friends. Teammates usually wind up being friends. Remember being on the playground or in the neighborhood as kids and choosing teams to play baseball, basketball, football or maybe even flashlight tag? If we were doing the choosing, we usually picked our friends that we liked and trusted the most, didn't we? We chose those we knew would have our backs in the heat of battle and be loyal to the cause, giving it their all. And if we were among those being chosen, we hoped that we were picked by the person whom we most admired and thought believed in us as well.

My friends, Pope Benedict's comment to the College of Cardinals can be heard by us as a reminder that we are on the Lord's team and with that privilege comes awesome responsibility. We must accept this responsibility with courage. During his homily given at his installation as archbishop of Baltimore, Archbishop Lori proclaimed,

“Now we must be loyal Americans by being bold and courageous Catholics!” In the current climate of attack against religious freedom and the definition of marriage by our government, we need to stand up for the truth and be heard.

The challenge to all of us as Catholics is this: Are we going to choose to be on the team that stands up for, and boldly proclaims with courage, the truth that the Church we love believes in and teaches or are we going to be on the team that sits idly on the sidelines, giving at best lip service to what the Church believes in and teaches, never going to bat for the truth when the stakes are their highest?

It's time to choose up sides, my friends. My prayer for all Catholics in Maryland, and all around the world for that matter, is that the Holy Spirit will provide the grace and courage for us to confidently choose teams wisely, so that even though our faces may be figuratively (or literally) dirtied and bloodied in the field of battle, we may savor the spoils of joy and peace – and being on the winning team.