

Calvert Hall teacher is a serious O's fan

✖ This week you'll see a story in The Catholic Review about Baltimore Catholics keeping the faith when it comes to the Orioles. You'll meet Calvert Hall English teacher Brendan Bailey, a 28-year-old super fan, who grew up in St. Joseph, Fullerton, and current is a parishioner of St. Ursula in Parkville. Here's a Q&A I had with him.

What's your earlier Orioles memory?

I cannot remember a time when I was not a fan of the Baltimore Orioles. Some of my earliest memories involve going with my dad down to Memorial Stadium, and feeling like the whole place was so much larger than life. That massive dedication wall seemed like it reached up to the Heavens for a little kid, and seeing the guys whose baseball cards I collected in real life felt too good be true.

What hooked you on the team and did you have a favorite player and why?

The Ripken brothers were definitely my idols growing up. My grandfather was a close friend of Cal Senior, and often spoke about the man's dedication and work ethic. His boys were heroes to me. I played 2nd base in little league and always dreamed of being able to turn a double play as smoothly and cleanly as Billy Ripken, and thought it was fascinating that two brothers could be beside one another on the infield of a major league team. I'm still the only guy I see wearing a Billy Ripken jersey down to Camden Yards. But Cal is a hero to this city. His humility, work ethic, and talent made him every kid in Baltimore's favorite player.

Did you have a childhood where they were mostly good or average as a team?

I vividly remember the 1996 and 1997 seasons; that wire-to-wire year in 1997 was absolutely unforgettable.

Why did you buy season tickets amidst all the bad teams they've had?

When I was finally old enough and financially able to make the investment, it seemed like a no-brainer. A real fan stands by his team regardless of the win-loss record. My faith in their future merits my support. For my wife and I, the season ticket plan is a guaranteed date night every other week. What better place to be with your sweetie than in the most beautiful ballpark in America watching the team you have loved your entire life?

How hard have the last couple of years been to watch?

I think last year's season was the hardest of all. In years past, the team didn't really give much hope in the first place, but last year for some reason Dave Trembley had me convinced that the team was really going to put it together. After watching Adam Jones and Matt Wieters clobber home runs in the opening game, I took it as a sign. However, the more appropriate sign was the blown save at the end of that game, and the blown season that fell apart in front of my eyes.

What gets you through the bad seasons and what keeps you coming back to the team?

I come back again and again because one day, hopefully sooner rather than later, this is a team that will turn things around. This is a city that is desperately trying to love its baseball team again, and when the pieces come together and the team takes that wild ride through the playoffs, I want to sit in those stands and know with pride that I was with them through it all.

How much Orioles merchandise do you have? Favorite jersey you own?

Too much, and my collection seems to grow every season. Probably a half dozen hats, 4 or 5 jerseys, and more t-shirt tuesday shirts featuring former orioles than I could wear in an entire season! My real joy is collecting bobbleheads; I have a growing collection in my Orioles-themed basement. I also love signed Orioles gear. My favorite piece of them all is my Billy Ripken jersey; I can't tell you how many times people at Camden Yards have asked me, "Wasn't Ripken's number 8?" I wonder if Billy gets that a lot!

Have you ever lost hope or gotten to the point where you've said prayer for

something involving the Orioles?

I refuse to pray for sports teams; I tell that to my students all the time too. God has more important things to do than worry about whether the Orioles win or lose. But, let's not forget, Jesus always reached out to the underdogs, the people most ignored by society, those people most cast off and hated. Doesn't that seem to suggest that Jesus would be an Orioles fan?!

What are you most excited about this season?

I want to see Brian Matusz and Jake Arrieta become the aces that I know they are capable of being. I want to see Guthrie finally establish himself as the professional veteran #1 starter that O's fans believe he can be. And, more than anything in the world, I want to see Matt Wieters be the first Oriole to hit a homerun off the warehouse.

Do you think they've got the pieces to compete?

If Matuz, Arrieta, Britton, and Bergesson continue to develop, yes. It all comes down to starting pitching.

Are you going to Opening Day?

Absolutely. It is the most exciting day of the year for me. Go O's!