

Fr. Jeff's Weekly Homily

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 6th, 2008

READING 1: Zechariah 9:9-10

Rejoice heartily...shout for joy...the warriors bow shall be banished and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.

Psalm 145

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

READING 2: Romans 8:9, 11-13

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if you live by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:25-30

“You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and have revealed them to little ones...Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart”

When Jesus proclaims the greatest of truths are hidden from the wise and revealed to little ones, he is not suggesting our faith be *dumbed down* to the lowest common denominator. On this Fourth of July weekend, I like to suggest an example from our National Pastime, or rather from NCAA women's softball.

They say that winning is everything. Or is it?

On Saturday, April 27th, 2008, in a baseball field in Ellensburg, Washington, a game was played which teaches us much about the real essence of winning. On that date two Great Northwest Athletic Conference teams (GNAC): Western Oregon University WOLVES and Central Washington University WILDCATS, two teams neither of which had ever been to the NCAA playoffs found themselves at the top of the league, playing a double header which may determine which team goes to those playoffs.

It was the second game of the double header, top of the second inning, two runners on base, the score is tied 0-0, when little, 5'2", Sara Tucholsky, stepped up to the plate. She was a Senior, right fielder, only a part time starter. She had only 34 at-bats for the entire season and a .153 career batting average—which for those of you who do not

know baseball is not exactly the most impressive batting average in the world.

But on that day, Sara did something she had never done before, even in practice, *she hit a home run* over the center field fence and remember, there were two runners on base!

She was so excited that as she rounded first base, she realized she had forgotten to touch the base and so she turned around to go back to touch the base and her knee blew out. She fell on the ground, writhing in pain. Her fellow teammate and first base coach quickly shouted, “NOBODY TOUCH HER!” because she knew that the rules state that if anyone from her team, or one of her coaches touched Sara, her homerun would be invalidated and it would go down in the record books as a single and she said in her mind” “I couldn’t take that away from Sara.”

They asked the umpires if there was any way an exception could be made. But the umpire talked it over and said no, that’s what the rule book says. They asked Sara if she could possibly crawl around the bases. But Sara was in far too much pain. They were just about to bring in a different runner; causing Sara to forfeit her homerun when something happened that changed everything.

At that point, Mallory Holtman, the Senior First Baseman from the OTHER TEAM, who has an amazing .419 [2008] batting average—by the way, in the Major Leagues she’d be being paid millions for that—and she is the all time home run leader in the conference—stepped in and said something. She turned to the umpires and asked: “EXCUSE ME, WOULDIT BE OKAY IF WE CARRIED HER AROUND AND SHE TOUCHED EACH BASE?”

Now, remember, this is the game that determines which team will go to the NCAA playoffs for the first time and she is volunteering to give the other team another score.

The umpires talked and decided there3 was nothing in the rules book that prevented someone from the opposing team from helping someone to score. And so Mallory and her shortstop carefully picked up Sara and after ascertaining that it was her right leg that was injured, they gently lowered her so that she could tenderly touch each base with her left foot as they passed.

Somewhere around second base, they started giggling and they didn’t even recognize that the spectators—mostly classmates and parents—were on their feet in tearful standing ovation.

Later that inning, Central Washington, Mallory’s team, scored two quick runs. At the end of the game, the score was:

Western Oregon University WOLVES (Sara’s team) 4

Central Washington University WILDCATS (Mallory's team) 2

After the game, Mallory just shrugged and said, "Sara hit a homerun; she deserved to have it count." Mallory's team had lost---or had they?

One thing I have noticed about winning in this world is that a lot of people who talk as though they hit a home run started out on third base. When Jesus said, "what is hidden from the learned and the clever is revealed to the little ones," he wasn't suggesting we "dumb down," but that we open our eyes and see reality without our exaggerated egos. Sara needed help. Mallory and her shortstop decided to do the right thing. I've spent a lot of time observing young people, especially in our parish, and one thing I have learned is that with them in our future, our future looks like Good News!

[to see video clips of this go to You Tube.com and search NCAA softball]

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