

Teamwork extends beyond the playing fields

Any parent who has ever helped their toddler change their clothes knows the struggle: You're trying to guide them ("take your arm out; put one leg into your pajamas at a time; slide the shirt over your head ..."), and they seem to be sabotaging the process at every turn – you pull the shirt up over their head, and they're pulling it back down. The two of you aren't working together, so nothing is getting accomplished. You're not working like a team.

You likely notice each year about this time that, as the seasons change and the leaves begin to fall, here in the United States we are surrounded by sports. Baseball is winding to a close with the World Series, or the Fall Classic as purists still call it, bringing a close to the season as it crowns a champion. Football season is in full swing, as boys and men clash on the gridiron across the country at all ages, battling for supremacy over 100 yards of turf. Basketball is just around the corner with towering giants getting ready to fight for control of the court.

What does this all have to do with family faith? The connection between sports and families is easy to see once you think about it. And in the context of faith and family, this example is vitally important.

In team sports such as baseball, basketball, football and soccer, no one is operating on their own, independent of the rest of the team. The team only works if everyone acts together, working toward a common goal. In a basketball game, if everyone on one team tries to get the ball and make the shot instead of playing as a coordinated group – passing around to the person who is open, and with the best opportunity to take the shot – the team won't stand a chance.

The same goes for family life. If each member of the family only makes choices that help him or her get what he or she wants, instead of what is best for the family, then no one will accomplish anything. In order for everyone to achieve what is best, all need to work together.

As Catholic Christians, we have an extended family as well. Because of our baptism, we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church. All of the baptized are our brothers and sisters, because we are all now sons and daughters of God. Jesus is our brother. The Holy Trinity has invited all of us to enter into the love that God is (see 1 Jn 4:8).

And the Trinity is the pinnacle example of teamwork. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Some great theologians have beautifully described the Trinity as a Father loving his Son so perfectly that that love becomes embodied in a third Person, the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are distinct, but not separate – one God in three divine Persons.

As Christians, and as families, we strive to live up to the example set by Jesus, to live up to his call to “be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). We should always try to work together and stay united, following the example of the Trinity and of the Body of Christ. And as we watch our favorite football or baseball team, let it remind us to work together as a team.

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