
Free From Keeping Score

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*
by the Rev. Canon David Boyd**

I have an apology to make.

On May 24, I declared from the pulpit that the Braves were the best team in baseball. I still believe this in my heart, but the superstitious sports fan in me has to reckon with the possibility that I put a vexatious curse on my beloved Braves the moment I said it. If so, I am sorry!

After an incredible April and May, June was a regression to the mean. Our double-digit division lead has dwindled to a few games. Drake Baldwin was out, Acuña's injured, the pitching has been frustrating, and we can't seem to win in extra-innings. It's been a rough stretch of below .500 baseball.

I do not want to be a fair-weather fan. Yes, it's very fun to support a team when winning feels almost guaranteed. It's also very hard to watch the team you love get batted around by bad teams like the Mets and the Giants. I confess, I've found myself tuning in to watch more World Cup soccer than Major League Baseball in the last few weeks, though it seems Belgium has cured me of that in 4-1 fashion. But it still makes me pause: am I more loyal to the idea of winning than I am to the team itself?

One great temptation of life is keeping score, tracking the various wins and losses of our lives. In the wins column: good health, loving family, devoted friends, financial security, etc. In the loss column: difficult diagnoses, fractured relationships, persistent loneliness, financial hardship, and the rest. On the whole, we assume a well-lived life should finish above .500. Anything less than that, we run the risk of developing resentment, frustration, and apathy.

And yet, enjoying a life of faith is so much more than evaluating outcomes. As much fun as statistics can be, baseball is more than sabermetrics and box scores. Even in the midst of a slump, there is beauty all around the diamond, if we have eyes to see beyond the scoreboard. The pop of the glove and the crack of the bat, a diving stop, a leaping catch. The bombastic excitement of the long ball, the sneaky strategy of a well placed bunt. My team or their team, a great play is a great play. There's ritual and tradition, the awareness of a much larger story being written pitch by pitch. Win or lose, the game is beautifully wondrous.

As Canon for Pastoral Care, it is a privilege to witness with you the many graces found amidst the hardships of life. Healing, reconciliation, peace, and joy abound in your homes and hospital rooms, even to the very end. I give thanks for your resurrection hope and your boldness to proclaim Alleluia at the graveside. Thank you for blessing this community with your faith and your perseverance.

I do not want to be a fair-weather fan. When life gets hard and it feels like the losses are piling up, I do not want to tune out and miss out on the beauty and wonder God gives us through the grace of the Holy Spirit. If you find yourself in the midst of a summer slump, this is my prayer for you: May God free you from keeping score and open your eyes to the wonder right in front of you, the ordinary graces of this day, whatever this day holds. Amen.