

As we have begun our coaches meetings for the program year, we have shared with our coaches the [Prayer Intentions from Pope Francis from August 2016](#):

In it Pope Francis extols sports as a place to build a culture of encounter toward world peace.

Given my sense that Pope Francis was talking primarily about this in the context of high level international competition and the Olympics where nations are competing against one another and his intention may be a bigger ask, our belief is that we should be able to create “friendly encounters” in CYO Athletics.

Basically, we have asked coaches to work together as one community to create the best possible environment for our kids to compete, to develop and to, most importantly, have fun.

Our mission statement for CYO Athletics is:

*CYO Athletics is sports done a different way – as one community. Individuals and teams strive for greatness in accordance with Gospel values. To develop the whole person, we teach success is not measured solely by the scoreboard, but by the effort, team play, and fun of the experience.*

While our youth can have a very positive experience if our team and our local community works to enhance their experience, the best possible outcome is when we as a larger community work together to create for all the competing youth to have the best possible experience.

Here are some ways in which we can work together:

## **REFEREES**

In many of our younger age groups, we rely upon volunteer referees. Sometimes, due to an overall shortage of referees, we may face the need for volunteers to step up in age divisions where we normally provide officials.

- Be willing to help your coach who has made the commitment of time and energy to coach practices and games to assist when a referee is needed;
- Referees, paid and volunteer, should contribute to the positive playing experience of all the athletes and minimize a sense of bias;
- Referees are not perfect. They will make mistakes or have a bad day, just like a coach or athlete – treat them with the same care and respect as you would someone from your own community, because in many cases, they are!

If you are interested in joining the officiating pool, please contact [tauno.latvala@seattlearch.org](mailto:tauno.latvala@seattlearch.org);

## **PLACT BANDS**

The exchange of these bands is to reinforce the values of CYO Athletics and specifically the Cardinal virtues of Fortitude, Justice, Prudence and Temperance that correspond with the GROW model of the Play Like A Champion Today® program that is covered in our mandatory coaches training.

It is our expectation and hope that our coaches facilitate this exchange and the conversations with their athletes that precede it with intentionality and work together with the competing team to make this a positive, teachable moment for the youth. Here is a [synopsis](#) we make available to our coaches that explains in more detail.

As parents we can support our coaches in this endeavor:

1. Discussing with our kids the virtues associated with the bands and how we see those being lived out by them and their teammates in practices and games;
2. Helping our kids understand that the bands are part of a process and not an end unto itself;
3. Acknowledge, recognize and “cheer” those moments in competition when athletes display these virtues;

### **FAN INTERACTION AND BEHAVIOR AT GAMES**

While this would seem to be an obvious statement, it sometimes need to be said. We as parents need to be aware of how our actions and reactions to a game influence our athletes in their experience of the same competition.

The [code of conducts](#) in CYO Athletics are merely reminders of expectations that most of us already understand. We will be imperfect in our responses at times, but how do we go about acknowledging to our athletes, teams, coaches and community when we have stepped over a line.

How can we work together with not just the fans from our community but from both competing teams to make the most positive experience for our participating youth? Here are some ideas from a [“Champion Note”](#) that I wrote for the Play Like A Champion Today<sup>®</sup> program last year.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Our cross country and track and field meets are tremendous undertakings of time and effort. We have very committed commissioners and staff who implement these programs but they cannot happen without all the volunteers who step up to ensure that we can run these wonderful events in as effective and efficient manner as possible. While we all want to see our kids compete, these volunteers ensure that all the kids have the opportunity to compete. Would you consider joining them?

In the end, we can only control what we can control, but we should strive to do our best to work together.

May we, as one community in CYO Athletics, always work together to maximize the experience of those who participate as athletes, no matter which parish or school they represent, in order to create a positive culture of encounter.

Blessings,

Tauno  
Director of CYO Athletics