



# How Do You Measure

# the Value of Sports?

**By: Julie Ferrucci**

*Mother of Vincent '16, Dominic '20 and Anthony '23*

In November, our family witnessed a beautiful example of the benefits of youth participating in sports. A dear college friend of mine lives in Chicago and her oldest son is a senior at one of Chicago's public college preparatory high schools. He has had a successful four years running cross-country for his high school and has a dream to run cross country in college. The strike of the Chicago public school teachers presented a huge roadblock for her son. The State CC regionals were scheduled but if the strike didn't end before the Regional meet, they would not be able to run in the race. We witnessed her son and his teammates step up and lead practices on their own. They rallied together and presented a motion to challenge the wording of the IHSA ruling about teams participating in post-season events when a school is on strike. He spoke to the Chicago media before the hearing at the Daley Center on October 25. He also asked his mom to reach out to her college friends for prayers, asking for strength and the ability to remain positive no matter the outcome. They persevered, became leaders and took positive steps to overcome obstacles. Unfortunately, the judge did not rule in favor of the student athletes and the IL Regional cross country meet went on without the Chicago Public School high schools participating. We are so proud of how this young man and his teammates handled their disappointment with maturity and that he is Trusting in Providence that his future in running is in God's hands.

***"It's not whether you get knocked down,  
it's whether you get up."***

**– VINCE LOMBARDI**

Most of us are aware of and realize the benefits of youth being involved in playing organized sports. If you were to Google that topic, you would find numerous lists and articles highlighting these benefits. The obvious are the numerous health benefits; physical development as well as building mental and psychological strengths and improving endurance. Others that are also familiar to us include the fact that being part of a team builds character, develops leadership skills, builds communication skills, teaches responsibility and helps kids learn healthy competition.

It is these latter skills that my husband and I have been able to witness firsthand in our own children and their friends over the years. Our family has been quite involved in CYO and Guerin Catholic sports for over 15 years. We have watched our boys overcome obstacles, encourage teammates, build their skills, advocate for themselves, step out of their comfort zones, and truly *Lead with Humility*.



**The Ferrucci Family (L-R) Steve, Julie, Anthony '23, Vincent '16 and Dominic '20 Ferrucci**

***"One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team,  
but one man cannot make a team."***

**– KAREEM ABDUL JABBAR**

Our boys have been fortunate to participate in CYO sports, allowing them to not only develop as individuals but to develop and grow in their spiritual journeys and grow their relationships and trust in Jesus. The simple act of praying with a coach and teammates after a practice or game builds a strong foundation for one's faith. Having the opportunity to pray with your team is a gift that our boys are realizing as they get older. On more than one occasion they have gathered with their teams to either pray for an injured or ill teammate, or a sick relative. Then there are the numerous opportunities to serve others. Going with their teams to serve at a soup kitchen, shop for a food pantry and collect coats and clothes for children their age increased their awareness of the needs of others in our local community. Collecting books and old uniforms to ship to third world countries also broadened their awareness of the needs of others world-wide. Learning how to Serve with Love is an

incredible blessing that participating in sports has provided our family.

Trusting, loving and leading with humility are what we have learned from our family and friends throughout our experience and involvement in youth sports. These are also values that the vision of Guerin Catholic was built on and continues to embody today. The Guerin Catholic mission statement also continues to build on

the foundation that our children started when they began playing CYO sports. "Preparing them to be servant leaders through authentic faith formation..." What a gift to watch our boys, Vincent '16, Dominic '20 and Anthony '23 either take the field or the court and know that they are learning (or have learned) so many substantial, sustained life lessons. And whether they win the game or not, they are leaving the field or court as winners on their journey to heaven!

# Creating Community Through Face-to-Face Encounters

**By: Shelly Thieme**

*Mother of Nick '16, Drew '18 and Zach '23*

When my charismatic and incredibly likable cousin, Joe, was in the waning moments of his life, he masterminded an outing for some of the terrific men he loved. He wanted one last trip to the Windy City where they could catch a Cubs game together. My Dad eulogized his nephew not long afterward following Joe's bout with brain cancer, and it was the joyful memory of that day cheering on their beloved "Cubbies" that nearly broke him in the re-telling as he stood up there in the front of the sanctuary.

Similarly, it was their common interests in either the Guerin Catholic or the Wabash College "Little Giants" football programs that cleaved together the majority of the folks who packed into Our Lady of Mt. Carmel a year or so ago to celebrate the life and mourn the death of another beloved young man named Evan Hansen. To my left that day sat GC Coach Tom Dilley and his entire squad, and to my right were Evan's Wabash College teammates. Their love for both Evan and football united so many who were present on that incredibly tough day.

Celebrating my 25th wedding anniversary this fall, my husband Tom and I found ourselves accompanied in Marco Island, Florida by two other couples, both of whom we met because of the sports involvement of our children several years ago at Guerin Catholic. These were faith-filled folks we hadn't previously known and likely would have never grown to adore had it not been for the unifying effects of sports involvement.

The point I am trying to make is that undoubtedly sports acts as a catalyst, and it's an avenue which allows us to experience a sense of family, belonging, and community. This goes for the athletes who participate as team members as well as those who are

coaching, managing, or supporting in some way. Sports is one of the last places in our digital world where the face-to-face encounter is still absolutely necessary. Most coaches don't find

cell phone use terribly appealing during practices or games, and as a result, it's one of the few times I've long known I won't be able to reach my kiddos! Sports provide a context for encounters with others. Sometimes those encounters are peaceful, and other times more passion erupts. Nevertheless, we all have genuine need to connect authentically with others and learn to understand that it's normal and healthy to feel frustrated, thrilled, guilty, disappointed, joyful...and yes, sad. Pope Francis has even addressed the value of sports saying, "Sports is universal; it extends across borders, languages, race, religion and ideology; it possesses the capacity to unite people together."

All of this brings me to a series of articles that captured my attention recently. They were printed in *The New York Times*, *Psychology Today*, and *America Magazine*, among other outlets. Essentially,



**The Thieme Family (L-R) Drew '18, Nick '16, Shelly, Tom and Zach '23 Thieme**

the conclusions they all came to were strikingly similar. They equated the rise in anxiety among all of us, but especially our young people, to some cultural shifts, not the least of which includes the unhealthy escape offered by electronic devices. Video games, social media use and the like have replaced in person opportunities to develop mental and physical strength. Lots of solutions are suggested by all the experts, and ALL of the spiritual giants and physicians quoted mention taking breaks from our phones and computers and finding creative ways to engage with others. As addicted as we all are to our technology, is this even possible? I'd argue, yes, it sure is!

One of the most well-adjusted young women here at Guerin Catholic decided to give up use of her phone entirely last summer. I giggled at her mom explaining the innovative ways her friends found to continue including her in their activities and get the word to her about what was going on. To be honest, her summer experience sounded a lot like my high school years in the 1980s. A friend told another friend, who walked across the street and knocked on the door. That's old school communication! My middle son, Drew, is similarly minded. He is taking a heavy class load at Purdue, where he is also working a part-time job, acting as treasurer for his fraternity, involved on a student board at the Krannert School of Management, and as a practice player for the women's basketball team. I often marvel at all he does, as well as the ferocity of his faithfulness. I wonder would any of that be possible for him if he were spending time on Twitter, Instagram, or playing video games like most of his contemporaries? I suspect not. Both these young "unicorns" inspired me to dig in on this topic!

I'm just one mom, but here's what I think we can do at Guerin Catholic to create a heightened sense of community and improve our collective mental health. I think we can engage more purposefully in our faith, follow the sage advice Paul gives us in his letter to the Phillipians (Phil. 4:6-9) and surrender the rat race of digital insanity to the Lord. *"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make our requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* Lovely instructions from our great saints are inspiring! HOW do we follow

that advice then make meaningful headway, practically speaking? I mean, no offense, and I know Paul was in jail when he wrote those beautiful words (so that seems like it might have been kind of a stressful time too) but he wasn't raising a houseful of teenagers with instant access to porn and cyber-bullying, while their Snapchat was blowing up...ha?

As parents we can and should help our kids manage the pressure and anxiety in a healthy way. It absolutely helps me to exercise—stretch, breathe, pray. As a parent, I spent way too much time putting myself last, and I have to remind myself that I am best able to help take care of those around me when I take time for prayer and self-care. We need to model healthy choices and encourage them in our children.

What else? Guerin Catholic is a small school, folks. There are lots of ways to plug in to healthy opportunities. Encourage your child to try out for a team or a play being put on by our Fine Arts Department! They will have to leave their phone for a couple hours while they are at practice—and it will be refreshing as heck for them! They might even grow to like the feeling of freedom and the challenges of being stretched to discover their strengths and weaknesses. Or, nudge your son or daughter to throw on the Golden Eagle spirit wear and show up to cheer on whatever team is playing or whatever production is currently underway. It's much better for them than staring at screens. Heck, how about we (parents) show up and cheer for other people's kids too? When you and your kid are there cheering, it's not only supportive and kind, it makes it more fun for me and mine to be there too—and togetherness is unifying. As Fred Rogers said, "In loving and appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something sacred." I quite agree! That young lady your child came to encourage today is then more likely to "pay it forward" and show up for her classmate next week. It creates a beautiful circle of love, a sense of belonging and community that we all long for. I hope to see your smiling face over at "The Nest" this winter! If you need someone to sit with, come join me. I'd love to meet all you purple loving folks!

**St. Theodore Guerin, Pray for Us!!**

## Fine Arts Event Schedule

**WINTER PLAY**  
**1984**  
January 16-18

**IB ART SHOW**  
February 13-16

**JOYFUL NOISE**  
**BAND FESTIVAL**  
**(Grades 4-8)**  
March 7

**SPRING MUSICAL**  
**SEUSSICAL**  
March 12-14,  
19- 21

**PROCLAIMING BEAUTY**  
**FINE ARTS SUMMIT**  
April 24

**SPRING**  
**CONCERT**  
May 20



Find the  
Athletics Schedule at  
**sports.guerincatholic.org**

**NEXT ISSUE: APRIL 2019**

**Do you have a story idea for a future newsletter?**

Please e-mail Shelly Thieme at [shellythieme@yahoo.com](mailto:shellythieme@yahoo.com) with your idea!

PARENTS—PLEASE JOIN US



GUERIN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL WELCOMES

# Rev. Phillip Bochanski

Executive Director, Courage International



## Catholic Church's Teaching on Human Sexuality

Tuesday,  
January 14, 2020  
7 PM

Father Philip G. Bochanski, a native of suburban Philadelphia, received the degree of Master of Arts in Theology from Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook, and was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in May 1999. He has served in several parish assignments, as well as in special ministry as a high school theology teacher, a chaplain for cloistered nuns, and a spiritual director for seminarians.

An award-winning author, he has written and edited five books, five audio series and numerous articles on various aspects of Church history, catechesis and spirituality. His newest book is *The Virtue of Hope: How Confidence in God Can Lead You to Heaven*, published by Tan Books.

Father Bochanski served for five years as chaplain for the Courage Apostolate in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Founded in New York in 1980, Courage provides pastoral care and spiritual support for Catholic men and women who experience same-sex attractions and who desire to live chastely in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church on homosexuality. In January 2015, he was appointed to the position of Associate Director. On January 1, 2017, Father Bochanski was named the new Executive Director of Courage International, Inc., which now includes more than 150 chapters in dioceses throughout the United States, as well as groups in 16 other countries on 5 continents. In 2019, Pope Francis awarded him the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, given in recognition of "sustained and exceptional service" to the Church.

**For more information about Courage International, visit [couragec.org](http://couragec.org).**