

Sunday January 19, 2020

Pastor's Corner

Faith and Life Lessons from Football

I'm still stewing over the disappointing ending to the Saints Football Season. The Saints had a gaudy 13-3 record and had played inspired football for several games in a row. The team seemed to be peaking at the right time. They had survived a major thumb injury to their starting Quarterback, during which time the backup Quarterback led the team to five victories. It looked like the Saints were primed for a Super Bowl Run. Then came a thoroughly uninspired and lifeless playoff effort against the Vikings, and the season was over. What an abrupt ending and major disappointment to Saints fans like me!

The Saints season mirrors what happens in the spiritual life: our prayer is going well, we aren't struggling with sin, and we are enjoying ministry and family life; then from out of nowhere, prayer becomes difficult and dry, temptations abound, and ministry and family life become hard. I think the life lessons from the Saints football season are these: good times, consoling times are a gift from God – relish them and be thankful; difficult and desolate times will come – expect them and don't despair when they come – keep doing everything as usual; fight through feelings of lethargy in times of desolation, knowing that consolation will return – eventually; keep the faith for God is ever-present in good times and in bad.

As I write this Column, it is two days until LSU tangles with mighty Clemson for the College Football National Championship. I am an LSU graduate and diehard Tiger fan. Once again, as with the Saints, it looks like it's LSU's time. The Tiger Offense is performing at a historic level and the defense has been improving for several games. However, the other guys have won 29 games in a row and their Quarterback has only lost once ever – in high school.

The story of LSU's Head Coach rising from alcohol dependency and disastrous coaching stops to the precipice of the College Football Mountaintop is inspiring. The same is true for LSU's Quarterback, who has ascended from a 3rd string nobody to a Heisman Trophy Winner. The LSU season abounds with lessons about the value of hard work, not giving up, not letting failure define you, not letting the opinions of others define you, being open to trying new things, and keeping the faith in adversity. Will the Tigers bring home the Title and make Louisianans – and Fr. Joe – very happy? Stay tuned.

In the meantime, it is Saturday morning and I need to write my weekend homily and visit a few people who are sick. On a rainy day, with football on the brain, it is tempting to coast through the homily and pastoral visits, but the lessons of the Football Tigers are inspiring me: don't coast; work hard; be faithful to the call; and remember, everything is gift from God. I am grateful for many faith and life lessons from football. *Geaux Tigers!*

God bless,
Fr. Joe