

Recently, I celebrated my nephew's 12th birthday at The Cheesecake Factory. For those interested, the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup Cheesecake is pretty awesome 🥰🐻. Anyway, my nephew asked me if I thought Yankee phenom Aaron Judge will hit sixty home runs, if not this year, then next year. Always a bowl of sunshine 😊, I said, "I don't think so." I went on to tell him that I think there is at least a good chance he will injure himself by this time next year. I went on to explain that this post-season, Yankee fans will read how hard Judge is working. Once the season begins he'll pull a muscle and be on the Disabled List for two months, à la Noah Syndergaard, the Met's workout warrior and now injured pitcher. I told my nephew he'd be better off this off-season following the team's moderate workout program, not some personal trainer's more intense program, reading one book after another, taking a two-week educational trip, to a place such as Italy or The Holy Land. He can afford to do so 😊. Also, he should do volunteer work. It will make him appreciate his talent more and how good God has been to him.

It's important to have balance in our lives. This is heresy to modern minds but talent trumps hard work, because talent is 100% God-given. Hard work only beats talent consistently when talent doesn't work hard. If Aaron Judge is as gifted as he seems to be, all he has to do is work *reasonably hard*. His more important human formation would be much better served living a balanced life. When athletes, or for that matter, bankers, reduce their lives to basically their occupation, it leads many times to injury in the athlete's case (Tiger Woods) and in both cases, some form of self-destruction. Hard work, and I am talking about obsessive work, many times comes from what St. Ignatius of Loyola would have called, "an evil spirit." Obsessive work can be a sign that someone is struggling with feelings of inadequacy, fear, lack of satisfying relationships in one's life, and is driven by trying to prove themselves to others. With that in mind, if a person is in an occupation or college major and needs to put an inordinate amount of time into their work just to get by, they may be in the wrong place. It shouldn't be that hard. It may be the job or school, it may be you. It's something to pray about.

I think we can learn from the four pillars of seminary formation: Human(social), Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral formation. In theory, it produces a balanced man. Additionally, in the seminary, until the early 1970's the lights went out automatically around 10:00 p.m. and there was no socializing allowed from that point on. It was known as "The Grand Silence." I was told as a seminarian that one of the reasons for it was to prevent some seminarians from working too hard or becoming too grade obsessive. All that the seminary priest faculty expected was an honest effort and for seminarians to accept themselves as God created them. Not everybody is called to be a priest/scholar in the mode of St Thomas Aquinas. If you ask me, it was a brilliant approach. I think Aaron Judge and all of us can learn from it.

God bless,
Father Pat