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Special Report: Pleasing God: A Visit with Grant Desme

By James Penrice
2/11/2010

Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)

The baseball player turned seminarian shares some of his journey. The seeds were planted early by a solid faith life practiced at home.



Grant Desme

BAKERSFIELD, CA (Catholic Online) – Catholic Online recently reported on Grant Desme, the former second-round draft pick of the Oakland A's who left a promising baseball career to enter a seminary and discern a possible call to priesthood. In an interview arranged by Catholic Athletes for Christ, Grant shared some details of his faith journey.

Like many potential vocations, the seeds were planted early in Grant's life by a solid faith life practiced at home. As a child he was exposed to many of the riches of the Catholic Church, including the Tridentine Mass and the Rosary. "I come from a family that attends the Extraordinary Form of the Holy Sacrifice," he said.

"So as soon as I was capable of saying the responses I served Mass as an altar boy, which I thoroughly enjoyed. We also tried to say a family Rosary, or at least a decade, every night. As a kid I was not always fond of it, because I would have much rather been playing baseball at the time then praying, but my Mom is positive Our Lady obtained many graces for us because of that."


Yet even with a strong foundation in the sacraments and prayer, thoughts of the priesthood never entered young Grant's mind. Like many boys his ambitions focused on athletic glory--and little else. "I grew up dreaming of being a big league baseball player," said Grant. "I could never get enough baseball in my life. Unfortunately this dream, as I became older, turned into more of an idol. I ate, drank, and slept baseball, so I worked very hard at it and did not give much thought to doing anything else with my life."

While determined to follow a baseball career, Grant found ways to integrate his Catholic faith into his playing. But he keenly observed that he did not always do it for the right reasons. "I had always prayed before playing," he said, "and had started playing with prayer cards in my back pocket during college. Unfortunately, I think this was done to help me succeed instead of out of love. Once I realized this I tried to use the game to show God how much I loved Him."

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This desire to love and glorify God soon led Grant to explore other avenues his life might take. After the 2008 season, he began to sense a possible call to priesthood. (Perhaps providentially, that same off season Grant attended a four-day baseball players' conference and retreat sponsored by Catholic Athletes for Christ, of which he is a member.) "At this point I had already had a great desire to do God's will and do whatever I could to please Him," he said.

Like anyone discerning a possible vocation, Grant realized he needed a game plan to sort it all out. "Other than continuing to go to Mass as much as possible and confession on a regular basis, two big things that really helped me discern God's calling were finding a good spiritual director and doing St. Louis de Montfort's Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary," he said.

When he left the Oakland A's Grant was ranked by Baseball America as the eighth best player in their minor league system, and was voted the Most Valuable Player of the Arizona Fall League for 2009. Yet losing one of their top prospects to the seminary was well received by the organization.

"The reaction that I have received from teammates, coaches, and the team has been overwhelmingly positive," said Grant. "It has been an extremely humbling experience to see how many people wanted to show their support for my decision and let me know that they are praying for me. I am very thankful for how well everyone has treated me."

Asked what words of advice he would share with anyone sensing a possible call to priesthood or religious life, Grant replied: "I would tell anyone who may be sensing a call to the priesthood or religious life to pray and visit the sacraments as much as possible. I think it is very important to have a strong devotion to Our Lady because there can be a lot of fears when thinking about 'giving up' everything for God, but she obtains the graces that you will be most in need of to really trust our Lord who really wants to give you so much."

It sounds like sound advice from a coach who knows what he's talking about.

James Penrice is a contributing writer for Catholic Online and the author of numerous books. He is also a writer for the Catholic Athletes for Christ website. Fr Peter Gallagher of the Colts is Catholic Athletes for Christ NFL Ministry lead Chaplain.

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