



Red Sox Mike Lowell: Faith Sustained Him through Cancer

7/10/2009

Catholic News Agency

Mike Lowell, 3rd baseman for the Boston Red Sox: 'I'd say my faith was a major reason why I was able to overcome the cancer.'

BOSTON, MA (CNA) - Mike Lowell, 3rd baseman for the Boston Red Sox, was featured on a CatholicTV talk show on Tuesday. A Golden Glove Winner, 4-time All-Star, and the 2007 World Series MVP, Lowell spoke about baseball, family and the faith that helped him survive his battle with cancer.

Lowell was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Miami at age 3. In the interview with CatholicTV, he recalled the influence of his grandparents, whom he described as "very religious," and his parents, who instilled family values in him from a young age.

Reflecting on his memories of going to Church together as a family every Sunday, Lowell said, "I think that foundation was set in me at a young age, and I think I used it to help me out in times when things aren't going so good later on in my life."

At age 24, Lowell was diagnosed with testicular cancer during a routine physical.

He acknowledged his fear at being told that he had the disease. "That's a very troubling word," he said, recalling that his grandmother had passed away from cancer about four years earlier. He remembered his initial reaction being, "Am I going to live or am I going to die?"

As he began to fight the cancer, Lowell came to rely heavily on his faith, family and friends. He spoke of the comfort that came from knowing how many people were praying for him. Looking back in retrospect, he said, "With all the support and all this faith that I had going behind me with my family and my friends, I feel like the cancer had no chance."

Lowell spoke of the difficult times during the treatment that drove him to cling to his faith when everything else was out of his control. "I'd say my faith was a major reason why I was able to overcome the cancer," he said. "I think especially in those times that are tough, if you have a faith that you can lean on, it definitely makes things a lot easier to cope with, and I think you take a more realistic approach," he added.

The experience with cancer made Lowell stop and re-examine his life. He realized that he needed to make his family and faith priorities in his life. Now, he says, he focuses on being a husband and father, and sees baseball as “a piece of me and not the whole me.”

In addition to reordering his priorities in life, Lowell has also made an effort to reach out to others. After his recovery, he and his wife set up the Mike Lowell Foundation to help children going through cancer.

“Physically, emotionally, spiritually, it was the most trying thing I had ever gone through,” Lowell recalled, noting all the struggles he went through even though knew he was financially secure. While he was undergoing treatment, he realized how difficult it must be for families with a member, particularly a child, undergoing cancer treatments when the family is not as financially stable.

“If we can financially help out that burden a little bit, I think it makes the whole process of going through cancer a little more do-able, and I think it allows the families to be a little bit more optimistic about their situation.” Lowell admitted that even as a professional baseball player, he still faces regular “bumps in the road.” But despite the difficulties he has gone through, he is optimistic and grateful. “I don’t view my life as all these tragic moments,” he said. “I view my life as very fortunate.”

As he shares his story with others, Lowell says it is important to remember that everyone goes through tough times, but that “you can find a positive in each obstacle and you can use it as motivation to either achieve a goal or to maximize your talents.”

Now, Lowell is trying to share his precious gift of faith with his two children. “They’re bound to go through things that are going to be tough for them,” he said, explaining that he wants to give them support and strong foundation of faith to deal with those difficult times.

“When all else fails, you’ll always have your faith with you.”