

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

The World Series is taking place this year without the Kansas City Royals. The general manager, Dayton Moore, in his book *More than a Season*, describes all the hard work and patience that built this team from one of the worst in baseball to the best last year. When he took the job, Moore hired additional scouts to go around the world looking for the best young athletes, sign them to contracts in the minor leagues, develop their abilities, get them to play well together, and then bring them up to the major leagues. The process, he predicted, would take about eight years, and it did. Moore is a Christian, so he built the entire organization on solid values. He refused to hire players who could cause discord or scandal, no matter how well they played the game. His team has both talent and character. All these efforts paid off with a championship, which should have made everyone happy. It did, but then we wanted another one. In the end, baseball is just baseball, and Dayton Moore would be the first to say that there is more to life than a game.

Often we put too much energy and attention into things that do not matter. We spend more time at work than with our families. We spend more hours watching television than volunteering. Students sometimes pay more attention to each other than they do to their studies. And sometimes we get totally obsessed with something that doesn't matter that much in the end: sports.

Today we begin hearing from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians. It is one of the oldest books in the New Testament, and it gives us a glimpse of the early Christian community. The Thessalonians were totally obsessed with something that did matter: Jesus Christ. However, they were being led astray by false prophecies, statements and letters claiming that the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ was at hand. Paul praised their good intentions and their good efforts, but he wanted to ensure that they were focused on things that really mattered. Their ultimate goal was to be glorified by Christ in heaven. Paul wrote, "Brothers and sisters: We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him."

Sometimes we spend time and money on efforts that do not matter. Other times we focus on what does matter, but it seems not to bring the results we want. Paul was praying for people like us. He prayed that God would take our good purposes and our efforts of faith and bring them to fulfillment. He prayed that God would do this not only for the benefits that come from these efforts in daily life, but to keep them focused on something greater: being glorified in Jesus Christ.

We may not see the results of our good work right away. Sometimes it takes days, weeks, months, or eight years to grow from a time of loss to a clear success. Ultimately, it is the work of a lifetime. As you look ahead to your activities this coming week, ask yourself which ones are not really worthwhile, which ones are doing some good for that day, and which ones are preparing you for glory in Christ. Then pray that God will bring this good work to fulfillment.