

The Kansas City Royals changed their slogan last week. They opened the baseball season with the words, "Your Hometown Team." There was a problem, though. New manager Tony Peña showed up at spring training with new t-shirts for the team, sporting the logo, "I believe." When the Royals started the season with the best record in the history of the club, people started saying, "We believe." So the official slogan changed last week. You won't see "Your Hometown Team" for the rest of the year. Instead you'll see one word: "Believe."

Belief is something we usually associate with religion, not with sports. In sports it means, we think this team won't play very well, but if you believe in them they will. Belief becomes appealing when reason doesn't work. But in religion, we believe that belief is reasonable.

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the greatest belief in Christianity. We believe that Jesus rose from the dead, and we believe that he will raise us to new life. The Catholic Church calendar ranks Easter as the most important celebration of the year. It even beats out Christmas. Christmas celebrates our belief that God became human, and that's pretty wonderful as it is. But Easter celebrates why God became human: in order to rescue us from death.

Shortly after the resurrection, Peter went to the house of Cornelius because everybody there wanted to be baptized. Today's first reading is Peter's speech. He summarizes all there is to know about Christianity in a few sentences: God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit when John baptized him. Jesus healed those oppressed by the devil. He was crucified, but God raised him on the third day. He then appeared to his followers, eating and drinking with them. He commissioned them to preach that God appointed him judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets of the past bear witness to Jesus, and all who believe in him in the present receive forgiveness of sins.

That's it. That's what we believe. We hear that summary today because Easter represents the greatest belief of all, the victory of Jesus over death. We have no fear of illness, inconvenience, anger, loss of life or even loss of an occasional baseball game, because Jesus conquered it all on the first Easter Day. Let us rejoice and believe.