

The Colorado Silver Bullets lost 7-0 Friday night to the Red Mountain Bandits. It was better than their first game, when they lost 19-0 to a team of Northern League all-stars. They haven't won a game. They haven't even scored a single run, but they still get news coverage. Why? Because the Colorado Silver Bullets are the nation's only all-woman professional baseball team. Even David Cone, Rockhurst graduate and Royals starter, revered because his outstanding pitching last season went unsupported by hitters, yet endured this impotent abuse of his own teammates long enough to enjoy the double digit victories now so numerous that everyone talks about juiced balls--even David Cone roots for the Silver Bullets because he thinks women should play for the Royals. "The point," he says, "is to enjoy the game. . . . Baseball is meant to be enjoyed by everyone."

I'm sure the Silver Bullets enjoy the game, but they'd probably enjoy it more if they could win. But the only way to play professional baseball is to play it unfairly matched with men. If the Bullets enter that world, live in that world, and do their best in that world, they will succeed mightily, even if the measurements of that world say they fail.

If Jesus had his way, his ball team (the disciples) would compete in a league of their own. How pleasant it would be if the disciples could just be church, if they didn't have to argue with pharisees, suffer persecution, or face internal disagreements. Jesus, at the Last Supper here, is leaving the world, to a place of perpetual peace and joy, but the disciples are staying. He prays for them to be united: "Holy Father, protect them in your name, so that they may be one, as we are one." He wants unity, but he knows they'll be living in the world, and it's hard to get both. Saying, "I want unity, and I want to live in the world," is like saying, "I want a clean house, and I want to have kids." Sooner or later you gotta choose one or the other.

Disunity is a part of life. You've seen it in your families. You see it in our parish. You see it in the crime of our city streets. You see it in the unspeakable horror of tribal warfare in Rwanda and in the genocide of Bosnia. You think we have problems. Meditate on a devastated Rwandan village where a college-ful of students has been carved up with machetes and school teachers lie slaughtered at their desks. Rwanda is almost 50% Roman Catholic.

What is wrong with our church? Nothing really. It's just that we are church in the world. That's the way Jesus constituted us. He was tempted to separate the church from the world, to give us a league of our own, but at the Last Supper, Jesus prayed to his Father, "I am not asking you to take the disciples out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." We suffer what the world suffers, but we bring Christ.

The single most often repeated piece of advice my dad gave me in backyard whiffle ball games was, "Keep your eye on the ball." My brothers and sisters, do not be distracted by the values of the world. The ball is unity. The ball is truth. The ball is joy. Keep your eye on the ball.