

Reflection

- Good morning everyone and a very special welcome to the young people here who are members of the CYO Basketball Program.
- Growing up I loved playing basketball and I have to admit I am a lifetime NY Knicks fan – you know we had to suffer for many years but we have a good team now so I’m excited.
- But I am also a big fan of Steph Curry the All-Star player on the Golden State Warriors.
- You may or may not know he is very outspoken about his Christian faith.
- He and his wife actually started a foundation called: Eat, Learn and Play so that poor families can have access to food, education and recreation spaces. They actually build neighborhood playgrounds in poor areas of California.
- Recently, I read a magazine article about Steph Curry. Did you know he writes a bible verse on his basketball shoes? If you look close at pictures you will see the words: Phillipians 4:13. That verse from the bible says: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. He puts it there as a reminder.
- The article went on to ask him why he pounds his chest and points upward after almost every three-point shot he makes. Curry said: He hits his chest to remind himself that his heart belongs to God. And he points upward to heaven to acknowledge how important God’s presence and God’s love is in his life. He says that while he plays on an NBA Team He is first and foremost a member of the Christian Team – the followers of Jesus. He says He plays and lives for God.
(Pause)
- When you think about it, being on a sports team and being on Jesus’ team involves a lot of the same things.

- Let's think about a basketball team.
- On a basketball team the players rely on each other, trust each other, to do their part, to do their best and give it their all for the team.
- Think about what makes a good teammate: they are not selfish – they pass/share the ball. They play defense, they don't complain about the amount of play time they are getting, they spend time practicing, they work hard to improve their talents.
- A good teammate is a person who makes those around them better, makes the team better. They don't just show up and give half an effort – they give it their all. They are not in it for selfish reasons or their own glory. And they truly have fun playing the game, it brings them joy.
- I think playing on Christ's team and being a good teammate is very much the same.
- A good Christian teammate realizes that we all need each other. People need us, they put their trust in us, rely on us to do our part to help make our world a better place.
- Jesus counts on us to pass his love around – just like in basketball we need to look around the court - to look around the world, our schools, our neighborhoods, our homes to see who is open – to see who is open and needs our help – and then pass that help over to them, pass that love of God over to them.
- There are lots of ways to pass God's love around. You can bring food and put it in the boxes at the doors of the church. You can help that person at school who could be struggling with some subject you are good at. You can include that person others usually leave out- include them in conversation and activities. You can help others avoid trouble by giving good advice and by being a good example.

You can pitch in with chores around the house to help your parents and siblings.

- As members of the Christian team we need to make life better for those around us. As members of the Christian team we need to give our full effort, we need to be all in for the team.
- I want you to notice three people Jesus mentions in today's Gospel reading we just heard. And think about what type of teammates they were.
- In the reading we see Jesus in the temple looking at what people are putting into the treasury box. Now back then people were required to donate money to support the community, especially supporting widows and orphans. The poorest and neediest people in their community.
- Notice first the rich people Jesus points out. We see they gave large amounts of money and that's ok - but it was from their leftover money, the extra money they had - it didn't really cost them much or require them to make a real sacrifice. Also if you gave large donations you had a special seat of honor in the temple, what you gave determined where you sat so many had selfish intentions, many let others know they were giving large amounts so they would look good and get places of honor in the community. You wouldn't say they were real "team players".
- Next, we see Jesus speak about the Temple Officials, the Scribes, the people in charge of the temple. These guys were the team leaders, trusted to make life better for the community. But they were only interested in making life better for themselves. They enjoyed being seen in fancy clothes and having others think how good and holy they were. Jesus tells us many of these people were selfish, definitely not team players. They actually took money from

the treasury to spend on themselves so they could live in luxury – stealing from those in real need. In basketball terms you might say they were “ball hogs” or “chuckers” – you know the person that keeps the ball for themselves, never passes, just takes all the shots – wants all the glory.

- But then we see the widow woman. a poor person with not a lot of money, someone who could really use the only two coins she had to take care of her basic needs.
- Jesus really knew the sacrifice that woman was making by putting her last coins in the treasury. We know his own mother Mary became a widow when Joseph died. He would have seen how Mary struggled to care for herself and Jesus.
- We see the widow at the temple make a real sacrifice by putting in her donation, doing her part – giving all she had. She knew the treasury collection was there to help others just like her and so she wanted to do her part. She made the real sacrifice for the team – not because of the amount she gave – but because of her intention – because of the reason she gave. To bring love and help to others. To make life better for those around her.
- That is what members of the Christian team are called to do. Be good team players – make life better for those around us.
- And to do this, to be really good team members there is another important thing we need to do.
- Just like members of a basketball team listen and learn from the coach, on the Christian team we need to listen and trust and learn from the head coach.
- On the Christian team that’s Jesus.
- How do we listen to Jesus, our head coach?
- One important way is to make time to pray. Pray first thing in the morning, at meals, during the day, before bed. Make time to be with God important – don’t just give God

whatever spare time you may have left over in your day, talk to God and listen.

- Another way to listen to our head coach, Jesus, is to show up to team practice and meetings. Come to Church and really listen to the readings. Our scripture readings always have a lesson we need to live our lives as better teammates.
- Go to confession once a month, tell Jesus the parts of your game that need improvement and ask Him how you can improve. He will tell you deep down in your heart how you can be better and he will send you the strength to do it.
- Most importantly receive Holy Communion. In holy communion God comes as close as can be and teaches us- one on one- how to live a good life, how to pass His love to others, how to play good defense by standing up for what is right and how to see each person as important, as a teammate.
- So, as we go out into the world, let's remember what team we really belong to. Let's remember God puts His trust in each of us to do our part to bring His love into the world. Let's give it our best shot. Like that widow in the Gospel did.
- As father Duff told me yesterday when you trust in Jesus and take that three-point shot for Him - you can never miss.