

Deacon Jodi Moscona's
Monthly Memo On:
Ethics, Spirituality and Success

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STEROIDS IN BASEBALL AND CHRISTMAS

It's Christmas time and this month's memo was going to be all about Christmas and it will be. However as I write this, I am terribly disappointed in one of my favorite baseball players, Roger Clemens. By now all are aware of the Mitchell Report on steroid use in Major League Baseball and the fact that he named many past and present players as users. I guess I should not be surprised that Roger Clemens was a "user" because when things look too good to be true generally they are too good to be true. Way down deep I knew that at his age he could not have performed so well without some "help". Yesterday, after the news broke, I was listening to a sports radio talk show and the host was explaining that he only liked baseball when the players were on steroids. He explained that the game was more enjoyable when the players were hitting the cover off the ball. Then it hit me. The use of steroids was a sort of "Christmas present" to the fans and so I have a topic for this month's memo.

THE NEWS

The news of today is the steroid report. Senator Mitchell investigated the use of steroids for nearly two years and verified what most people already knew. Steroid use was rampant in the Major Leagues. Players that have won big awards, hold many records and made millions of dollars did it with the help of performance enhancing drugs. The report seems to blame everyone from the owners to fans. But to me the real issue is how do we protect our youth from the apparent health risks that result from steroid use? More importantly, why is this such a big story?

I think it is such a big story because there is so much money at stake. And, that is what makes the report and Christmas so similar. Americans spend millions and millions of dollars on entertainment and it is reflected in the inflated salaries that athletes and entertainers earn. I am not opposed to anyone making their share. In fact am in favor of the actors and athletes getting their piece of the pie. The problem is with the size of the pie and how and why it is so big.

ATTITUDE

In today's society, we are so caught up in ourselves that we often miss the impact it has on others and on society as a whole. We have developed an attitude that can be described as a "you owe me" attitude. I go to a sporting event and pay for a ticket so you owe me a victory. I work all day and it is difficult so you owe me time to relax and unwind. I pay my taxes so the government owes me good government. Most of us have developed an attitude

that is void of the “giving” mentality. Many give to get something. For example, we give money to charity by check so we can get the tax deduction. We give to a particular candidate because he or she has promised to enact some law that benefits us. Now, at one level, we are not to blame for this because the system has developed in such a way that to not live within the system winds up having a very negative affect on us. For example if we don’t give or vote for the candidate that is most likely to “help” us we might get one the actually enacts laws that hurt us.

So what does all this have to do with steroids and Christmas? Well, as I was thinking about this I realized that the reason athletes use steroids is to tap into that large amount of cash that is available to those that perform at the highest levels. And, the reason the cash is available is because we have our priorities wrong. We look up to these athletes and are willing to keep paying more to see them play. In a similar way, we are paying more and more attention to the commercial element of Christmas than to the very purpose of Christmas. The attitudes we have developed are at the root of the problem.

I am not judging any of this, only observing. There is a saying that tells us that instead of judging just look at the “fruit on the tree”. Scripture says that a good tree will have good fruit and a bad tree will have bad fruit and a good tree cannot have bad fruit and a bad tree cannot have good fruit. So, I am only being a fruit inspector, not a judge. And when a report so critical of baseball is issued, it looks to me to be bad fruit.

THE SPIRITUAL

When I was a young boy in the late 50’s and early 60’s, we had stickers on the windows of our front door that said, “Keep Christ in Christmas.” We see very few, if any similar signs today. It’s not a new thing that we seem to be losing or missing the true meaning of Christmas. A sign of the times is that stores are putting Christmas displays up earlier and earlier. In years past, stores unveiled Christmas after Thanksgiving, but now it starts after Halloween. This is an indication that we are seeing Christmas more and more as a secular event than as a holy, spiritual holiday. In this politically correct society, it seems that we are supposed to suppress the spiritual basis for the celebration of Christmas so we don’t insult or offend someone. BA-HUMBUG!

I must admit that I am a bit put out at the efforts made to change the season from the Christmas season to the Holiday season. I have nothing against any religion having the right to promote its special season be it Hanukah, Ramadan or whatever. But, when an overwhelming majority of people identify with Christmas why do we need to change it for a few? I can’t stop thinking that our society could use a little bit of spiritual tradition to put us back on track. I think we could all use a little boost in our spiritual development especially when it comes to assessing our priorities. When I look at people that want to do get the “Christ” out of Christmas, I see people who really need more “Christ” in their lives. They need a little bit more spiritual development. Similarly, when I look at the ball players essentially cheating by using steroids, I see guys that need a little boost in their spiritual lives. Cheating is actually stealing from your opponent and the Commandment that tells us not to steal.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I knew a very successful business man some years ago who told me that he looked at all challenges through his spiritual glasses. He said he believed all our decisions could be guided by our sense of right and wrong. He went on to say that the choice between “right” and “wrong” is a spiritual one. I really didn’t get it then, but now I understand that he was really telling me that our spiritual development is linked to our values. It is not good enough to just know the difference between right and wrong. It is essential to know the difference between right and wrong and then to choose “right”. Morally and ethically, we need something to guide us. Many call it our conscience, but something develops our conscience. Whatever you use to develop your conscience, I pray that during this special season of Christmas you find the time to work on it.

The phrase, “Peace on Earth, Good will to all Mankind” is ringing in my ears as I ask you all to pray for our military men and women and their families during the Christmas Season. We all hope and pray for a quick end to the war so that they may all come home.

Peace and Grace.

Jodi

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