

Banning sporting events on Sundays is something to cheer for

A few weeks ago I was making small talk with an acquaintance at my daughter's softball game – a typical end-of-the-week conversation. It always starts the same: “Big plans this weekend?” And so I quickly rolled through the schedule: “Not really. We've got that doubleheader tomorrow and a graduation party out of town on Sunday. At some point we've got to go grocery shopping, mow the lawn, clean the house – the usual.”

And then I said something that I didn't think twice about; it was mostly an aside to myself, but it struck him as odd. I said, “And we've got to figure out when we're going to Mass.”

“You go to church every weekend?” he asked with equal parts suspicion and curiosity. “Yep,” I said, “every weekend.” He gave a nod and a half-smile that conveyed his surprise, as if to say, “People still do that?” – like if I told him we still record TV shows on our VCR.

But the Lord knows it isn't always easy. Generally we're a Saturday-night-vigil family, because getting six kids – from the 16-year-old down to the 1-month-old – up and around for Sunday morning Mass only makes confession all the more necessary. Still, there are times we have to adjust or divide and conquer – things come up.

Thankfully, with several parishes around us and a smorgasbord of Mass times available, the Church generally makes it easy to fulfill our Sunday obligation.

Except when it doesn't.

During the fall our 10-year-old plays football for our parish

school. Games are scheduled for 10:30 and 11:30 a.m on Sunday mornings – right in the heart of Mass times. Occasionally he and a smattering of teammates could be found kneeling in the pew at 9 a.m. Mass in cleats and football pants – their helmets and shoulder pads waiting patiently in the car.

Yes, there are plenty of Mass options in our area, but it never made sense that a Catholic organization would put something in the way of families attending their preferred church at their preferred time. It seems counterintuitive to the mission of the Church.

Apparently I'm not the only one who feels this way.

In a pastoral letter entitled "[The Day of the Lord](#)," released May 15, Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron wrote: "We in the Archdiocese of Detroit will cease sporting events on Sunday. This means that competitive athletic programs in the grade school and high school levels are called to no longer play games or conduct practices on the Lord's Day."

Archbishop Vigneron goes on: "In shifting away from the hustle of required sporting activities on Sunday, we will reclaim this holy day and create more time for families to choose activities that prioritize time spent with each other and Our Lord."

While I love watching my son play football on Sunday mornings, Archbishop Vigneron deserves kudos for taking a stand – one that I hope catches on in dioceses across the country.

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