

Happy New Year!

It is a phrase we have both proclaimed and received in the past week or so. It signals a fresh start and the opportunity to begin anew. A time to resolve to be better than we were last year and take steps in a variety of areas in our life to do so.

Similarly, Pope Francis has instituted our Jubilee Year as the [Year of Mercy](#) to begin on December 8.

Therefore, many of the monthly reflections in the year to come will revolve around the theme of Mercy and will share different resources, including these from the [Archdiocese of Seattle](#) for engaging this approach to living our lives of faith.

We start with the focus on our young people.

Bo Hanson, a presenter at the PLACT Conference last summer, talks in [this short video about resilience](#) and the need to exercise this just as we would a muscle.

CYO Athletics provides that opportunity: to build resilience in our young people, to allow them to perfect in themselves the Cardinal virtues of fortitude (courage), justice (relationships), prudence (wise decision making) and temperance (perspective).

Whether it is a call from an official, teammates who don't pass the ball, give their best effort or inspire team cohesion, an overly aggressive or physical competitor, an injury to themselves or a teammate, disagreement with coach's strategy or perhaps just the disappointment of things that don't go their way, our young people are presented with many chances to grow through the experiences of events that are out of their control.

They are challenged, as we all are, to present our best selves when faced with adversity and be changed in the process.

The primary question that Bo Hanson asks coaches (which is also a question that applies to us as parents) is what kind of environment are we creating? Are we helping them to stand on their own two feet, to be a part of solving their own problems and challenges?

I am reminded of [the story of the man and the cocoon](#) which I have shared before. Just like the man in the story we have to be careful about how our innate desire to "guide" our athletes and "protect" our children does not impede the transformation they are capable of experiencing.

Where does the sense of mercy come in? We know that Christ's love and example gives us strength. We know that there is a support that we can rely on from God who loves us unconditionally, even when the indignities of our lives are due to our own failings and imperfections, us not being our best selves.

That love does not cast judgment but instead allows us to move through the moments that we must, to shepherd us and not abandon us. To be present and a source of support just as we can do as coaches and parents with our athletes and children. To not give the answers but to ask the right questions.

The most important part for us is to model the process, the engagement of how we can be our best selves, to overcome the adversity that we face, not alone but strengthened in our relationship with God (as our athletes are by us as coaches and parents) and with those around us who love us unconditionally (as our athletes are by their teammates and the community).

We will fall. That is certain. Do we have the ability to be merciful to ourselves? Others will fall. This we know. Do we have the ability to be merciful to them?

Do we have the ability to call ourselves and others to be our best selves? What kind of environment are we living in?

May our teams, families and community be a reflection of mercy both given and received!

Blessings,

Tauno Latvala  
Director, CYO Athletics