

Chapter One

The Call to Greatness

In a world saturated in mediocrity, our culture is in a crisis that devalues and depreciates man's universal call to holiness and greatness. We want to look more closely at our call to greatness and see what this entails as we strive to live this call on the field and in our lives.

Verse of the week: «Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ» (Col. 3:23).

As athletes we all want to achieve greatness in our sport by winning championships and becoming the best athlete in our sport.

This desire to be the best is actually ingrained in all of us no matter what we are doing. We just allow the desire to come to the surface in things we are good at because we can see the goal close at hand. The desire to become the best version of ourselves, to live for something more than ourselves, is the purpose for which we were created, and when we tap into that desire we live out our call to greatness.

Read quote:

“The ways of the Lord are not comfortable, but we weren't created for comfort, we were made for greatness.” - Benedict XVI

«We were made for greatness.»

1. What does it mean to be made for greatness?
2. What keeps us from greatness?
3. What would it take to live out the call to greatness?

Let's look at the life of an athlete:

4. Is it a life of comfort? Why or Why not?
5. What if you wanted to be a great athlete and reach the top of your game and be the best athlete in your sport? What would that take?

6. Knowing that the life of an athlete is not a life of comfort, have you ever cut corners during practice? Why?

Think about this example Matthew Kelly gives in his book *Rediscovering Catholicism*:

«We sit in a chair, one cheek falls asleep and so we shift; our eyes get dry, we blink; we cross/uncross our legs as we please, if we're thirsty, we get a drink; we are afraid of pain, of being just slightly challenged or the least bit uncomfortable.»

Agree? What are some other examples that show we are wired for comfort?

The world also tries to make everything as easy as possible, so we have to exert the least amount of effort in our lives; it tells us it's ok to live a life of mediocrity. The "anything goes" philosophy allows the world to justify laziness and the inability for personal excellence.

7. What are some ways the world tells us to settle for mediocrity?

«The ways of the Lord are not comfortable.»

8. What does this quote mean to you? .

Let's compare the Christian life to the life of an athlete. We already discussed that the life of an athlete is not a life of comfort.

9. Would you say there are parallels between an athlete and a Christian? What are some parallels?

The call to greatness implies living out personal excellence in all areas of our lives. It involves taking a risk, standing out, and putting yourself in uncomfortable and painful situations.

10. When have any of you put your neck on the line, taken a risk, for something you knew was the right or better way? What did you gain from that situation and do you feel you are a better person because of it?

Jesus said in the Gospels **“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** Just as in the athletic life there is a degree of self-sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of becoming a better athlete, there is also a degree of self-denial and sacrifice in the Christian life.

Let's compare the Lord to a coach.

11. What type of coach would you have if he always made practice easy?

Would you be increasing your endurance level if you never perspired or if your coach never pushed you? Would you have the feeling that you have accomplished something at the end of the workout? Would you be the best athlete you could be? Just as being a true athlete is not easy, neither is being a true Christian leader.

Read G.K. Chesterton Quote:

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried.”

What do you think about this quote? Is it true?

Although it will be difficult at times, if we follow the ways of the Lord we will become better people with an increased joy and sense of meaning. The same is true for an athlete who follows the ways of his/her coach; they will become better athletes.

The call to greatness calls us to fight against mediocrity, against the world that tells us living a mediocre life is okay, and most of all to fight against that comfortable urge that seems to always pop up inside us. It is what we do when no else is looking.

“The vision of a champion is someone who is bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion, when no one else is watching”

- Anson Dorrance (Head Women's Soccer coach at University of North Carolina. His teams have an all-time record of 673-33-21 (.940). Under Dorrance, UNC has won 20 national championships, including 19 NCAA crowns and one AIAW title, 19 regular-season ACC titles and 19 ACC Tournament championships. He was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame on August 2, 2008).

Would you agree with this quote? Why?

What is something in your life that you find yourself doing at 'half-speed' or partial effort? Have you ever wanted to just get things finished and not worry about the outcome?

Revisit verse of the week: **«Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ» (Col. 3:23).**

Do you respond better when you have a challenge before you?

How can we challenge ourselves to live out greatness in all areas of our lives?
How can we challenge our teammates in their call to greatness?

ACTION POINT:

Challenge yourself in a practical way for the week - both on a natural level (perhaps in our athletic life) and our spiritual life (our prayer life today). Have them share it with the group if they are comfortable for accountability.

Close by reading Philippians 2:14-16

"Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."

Closing Prayer

