

Devotion, Week of October 1, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Did you know that “Faith Nights” have been around in major league baseball since the 1950’s? The Atlanta Braves started one in 2006, with pitcher John Smoltz preaching on the same field where his team had lost earlier that day. Faith nights are still going strong across America. At least once during a season, many teams sponsor a Faith and Family or some other faith-themed evening after a game – whether the home team loses or wins, it makes no difference. Players give testimony and a local praise band sings.

One Dodgers’ fan said, “It’s really nice to see them talking about Christ and God in public, just spreading the word. Nowadays, I believe a lot of people that are Christian try to hide it. ... So this is a very good thing.”

At least 18 MLB teams have hosted faith nights this season. “He Gets Us,” a media campaign touting Jesus, spent \$20 million earlier this year to reach roughly 115 million Super Bowl viewers. “He Gets Us’ goal is to reintroduce people to the Jesus of the Bible and his confounding love and forgiveness,” campaign spokesperson Jordan Carson said in a statement. “The best way to do that is to meet people where they are. That is why you see our ads at a variety of events, including sporting events.”

Sometimes the best way to reach someone is not in the pews, but at the baseball field, it turns out. A great way to extend evangelism outside our church doors, where our team heroes give testimony to their fans about a power beyond the swinging bat and the knuckle ball – a power that all of us have access to. I can look at this phenomenon and think of Jesus attending a baseball game back in Galilee – and perhaps rooting for the Nazareth Nightingales against the Shiloh Sheep. OK – that was a little over the top. But I still think Jesus would LOVE baseball.

Jeanne