



Champion Coach Note: Cardinal Virtue #1: Justice

In 2004, Pope John Paul II said, "While playing sports, Christians also find help in developing the cardinal virtues – fortitude, temperance, prudence, and justice." As a coach, encourage your athletes to become the best people they can be by living out the four cardinal virtues. These virtues challenge your athletes to consider what kind of individuals they want to be, and to make choices consistent with that ideal. Today begins a four week series on the cardinal virtues.

Justice, one of the four virtues, involves treating others with care and respect. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reads: "Justice toward others disposes one to respect the rights of all and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good." It involves having the courage to do what is right, even when that may be unpopular. Justice is, as Benjamin Disraeli said, "Truth in action."

In athletics, justice stresses fairness and respect within a community and a team; it stresses adherence to the golden rule: "Treat others as you'd like to be treated"; it stresses inclusivity and compassion; it stresses honor, and an understanding of what is moral and just. The virtue of justice involves extending beyond oneself – turning away from selfish tendencies to make sure one's community and teammates are the best that they can be.

The virtue of justice is manifested in every athletic competition. Every athlete is called to participate



"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

- Micah 6:8

Athlete Reflection

Read this story and watch this [clip](#) with your team about two hockey goalies who shared a moment of justice in sport. Then ask your team to reflect on and discuss these questions.

1. Do I demonstrate fair play and sportsmanship (components of the virtue of justice) when I participate in my sport?
2. Do I respect everyone on my team and in my community?
3. Do I demonstrate gratitude for the opportunity to participate in my sport?
4. Do I train, prepare, and play with honor?
5. Do I live out the virtue of justice both in my sport and in all areas of my life?

with honor and fair play, and to respect opponents, referees, coaches, and fans. Within a team, justice involves loving one another, working for the true good and betterment of every teammate. Since it calls individuals to focus outward on others, a key component of justice is gratitude. Demonstrate to your athletes the importance of thanking referees, opponents, and teammates.

As a coach, emphasize pursuit of the virtue of justice to your athletes. Walk with them as they strive to live out this and other virtues and become well-rounded individuals who can apply what they learn in their sport in every facet of their lives. As a coach, cultivate a moral community that is committed to justice, respect, and tolerance. Finally, model fair play, cooperation, and respect through your actions in practice, on the sidelines during competition, and through your own attitudes and behaviors.