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Baseball, a Catholic school and a girl in Phoenix

Joe Ferullo | May. 16, 2012 NCR Today

These days, it's not hard to find odd stories about strange doings with the name "Catholic" attached. A friend sent this one [1] into my email-box about a crazy dispute in Arizona.

Seems a local high school there, Mesa Prep, won their league championship by default when their rival for title decided to forfeit the big game. That sort of thing -- forfeiting a title match -- usually happens only after something huge, like, say, a tornado sweeping through town, shredding all the team uniforms after flipping the school bus upside-down on Highway 17.

This was not that. Mesa Prep won by default because their rival, Our Lady of Sorrows, didn't want to play against Paige Sultzbach, a girl and the team's second-base person.

Our Lady of Sorrows felt very strongly that female-types had no place on the field -- and took a stand. Just how this could possibly happen becomes clearer when you learn that the all-too-aptly named Our Lady of Sorrows is run by the very conservative Society of St. Pius X, founded by the -- shall we simply say "controversial"?- French bishop Marcel Lefebrve in 1975.

According to the ESPN website Grantland.com, the school issued this statement when announcing the forfeiture:

> "Teaching our boys to treat ladies with deference, we choose not to place them in an athletic competition where proper boundaries can only be respected with difficulty," the statement read. "Our school aims to instill in our boys a profound respect for women and girls."

To review: Only by rejecting a female athlete and cheating our own team of a chance to do their best can we teach respect between the genders.

Now, look, yes: The society is a fringe group that has been under the Vatican microscope for a long time, and Lefebrve was excommunicated in 1988 by Pope John Paul II when he consecrated four bishops without Rome's approval. So this group hasn't gotten a big bear hug from the Curia, and I understand that. Yet the society is still with us, strong enough to raise money to build and run schools, for example.

And these days, nasty Vatican headlines are directed not at the society, but at American nuns. Stories like this one just add to a narrative that says the church has a problem with strong women, with women as leaders.

It's a problem that seemingly knows no bounds -- not in a homeless shelter or hospital run by sisters, and not on a baseball field in a desert city under a strong bright sun, where a girl dares to play a boys' game.

Source URL (retrieved on *05/06/2016 - 08:38*): http://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/baseball-catholic-school-and-girl-phoenix

Links:

[1] http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/7929602/the-bizarre-case-paige-sultzbach-#8212-all-boys-team-forfeited-championship-rather-play-her