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Bishops & basketball coaches: recruiting kids

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NCR Today

The lead story in the *Arkansas Catholic* is titled, "Diocese hosts first seminarian signing days," and includes a picture of Bishop Anthony Taylor signing letters of intent for two high school boys who agree to go directly into the diocesan seminary upon their high school graduation in front of a gymnasium filled with supporters. (Ironically, the kids appear to be in trouble and are getting a hall pass from the bishop. Where's the joy?)

The story is filled with earnest enthusiasm by family members and the Catholic high school principal. It's certainly an interesting strategy. What happens if these boys decide to leave the seminary? Is there an "unsigned day" in the gymnasium filled with the same people? Seems like a lot of pressure placed on these boys.

It calls to mind the Legionaries of Christ's "Conquest Clubs" that attempt to get 8-10 year old boys into the priesthood channel before the world gets them. (Have the LCs ever disclosed the dropout rate from their seminaries?)

At the same time college basketball coaches (such as Tom Crean, head hoops coach at Indiana) are now focused on high school freshman, and even 8th graders, as part of their recruiting strategy.

Are these strategies prudent? Is it me or does some of this seem out of control?

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