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Faith and Football

by Joe Ferullo

NCR Today

Amid the hype and hard-sell of Super Bowl Sunday this weekend, there's another bit of TV sports viewing that stands out as an island of serious reflection: it called "Faith Bowl III."

The half-hour program is produced for the third year in a row by the Hollywood-based Catholic production company Family Theater -- it's a thought-provoking roundtable discussion by three prominent Catholic athletes, discussing the challenges of living as a Catholic and raising a family in the high pressure world of professional sports.

This year's discussion features Mike Piazza, retired catcher for the New York Mets and Los Angeles Dodgers; Mike Sweeney, the DH of the Seattle Mariners; and Bobby Keppel, relief pitcher for the Minnesota Twins. All three players are part of Catholic Athletes from Christ, a growing organization which serves Catholic athletes. The group produced the show with Family Theater and the Knights of Columbus.

Any sports junkie knows there is more sports programming available now than ever before: local TV stations and cable operations, the broadcast networks, ESPN, and more. But little of it examines the real lives of athletes, let alone gives them a chance to talk about the off-field issues and ideas that mean something to them. "Faith Bowl" is a tiny piece of antidote, and shines a little on a new corner in these players' lives.

You can find "Faith Bowl" this weekend in EWTN, CatholicTV (Boston), Catholic Life Channel (Louisiana), Catholic Community Television (Central Florida), Instructional TV (New York), Catholic TV (Scranton), Catholic TV (Raleigh, NC), and the Salt + Light Network (Canada).

Fr. Willy Raymond of Family Theater is the executive producer - his work always seems to draw out a

different and deeper side of actors, celebrities, and sports figures. "Faith Bowl III" should deliver much the same.

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