

## **Don't be afraid to make cuts**

As an avid baseball fan, I took the time to see "Moneyball", the movie about the revolutionizing of baseball by 'geeks,' - by those who try to measure a game with so many intangibles. Without trying to over-romanticize baseball, which I would if I could, still the movie had some applications to the spiritual life, and to vocations.

Becoming holy is hard. Answering our vocation is hard. Yet the instructions are simple. Take up your cross, and follow me. Those who lose their life by following me will find it. "Moneyball" is a movie about trying to keep a simple thing simple. To win a championship, especially if you are the Oakland A's who only spend a fraction of what the Yankees do on payroll, you have to keep simple things simple. Namely, you have to do the things, and only those things, that bring you closer to winning games.

The saints tell us that to be holy is to will one necessary thing, to the exclusion of all else. The spiritual life is also a contest. It is a battle to keep a simple thing simple. In "Moneyball" there are a thousand times when the GM, Billy Beane, is tempted to doubt the statistics that he has put his faith in, statistics that will lead to the outcomes he desires. There is a losing streak, and lots of ridicule. Even his own sabermetrician loses his faith for a brief time. His own manager won't play the team the way it's designed to be played. But Billy stays the course, and wins 102 games. And in the process of winning those 102 games by being faithful to what he believes, Billy discovers why he made the mistakes he did in life, and finds a path to holiness himself.

The tempter does not want us to succeed in becoming holy. And for one who tries to find his vocation from God, the adversity will certainly be worse. Intuitively, we all know how to answer our vocation. We must stay focused on our desire to only know and do God's will, and not our own. We have to keep things simple, and cut the things that make us doubt, make us fear, and make us settle for less than our vocation. The hardest thing for a man that is called to the priesthood is to make the cuts in his life that will keep him moving toward the goal of ordination.

365 times in the Bible we hear 'Do not be afraid.' It is a message we have to learn over and over again. In "Moneyball" it is not easy to watch Billy make the cuts he needed to reach the goal. But make them he did. And so should we.