



Prez Release

Got Accountability?

Life lived in the public eye can have its rewards. There are currently several examples of the tragedy that can be experienced when recklessness is part of the public life equation.

Barry Bonds is closing in on the home run record to the legendary Henry Aaron. I remember the day Hammerin' Hank hit number 715 to break Babe Ruth's mark. Aaron played in an era that had too many remembrances of Ruth and a scarcity of appreciation for the fact that an African-America athlete was breaking the home run record of the Great Sultan of Swat. He endured the flotsam and jetsam of too many folks whose idea of diversity was fairly narrow.

Bonds has incurred the wrath of spectators and media alike. There is certainly a residual left over from the Ruth era and still racial tension that raises its ugly head too often. Bond lives in an era that has seen athletes benefit from the sacrifices of superstars like Hank Aaron. Yet Bonds has infuriated both media and fans with his arrogance and repetitive refusal to see why his records may be asterisked. He has simply refused to acknowledge his participation in the steroid usage mess. This magnificent athlete has created a world where he will probably never get his due recognition because he has built the public perception he doesn't care what anyone thinks about him. Even worse, he acts as if the rewards of his public notoriety are his to enjoy without personal accountability.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles is in the news for their \$600 million settlement on over 600 cases of sexual abuse by priests. While the settlements are certainly a public acknowledgement of culpability—victims really want more than money. They want public accountability by priests for their unlawful and immoral behavior and they want the information from Cardinal Mahoney that will lead to criminal prosecution of the culprits. That information doesn't seem to be forthcoming—hence the public's disgust with the Catholic Church, Christianity in general, and all authority figures as well.

The potential for influence, that is part of public life, requires that those who receive the honor of their lives being viewed as examples to be followed; cannot create their own

rules and act as if that public trust is only one way. Barry Bonds is an athlete whose career deserves admiration. I don't think he will ever get the accolades he has earned. The sad part is he doesn't seem to care and he has contributed way too much to the deterioration of the current situation. ESPN will replay home run #756 for several days and the thrill will be gone.

The Catholic Church deserves recognition for the huge contribution they have made to American life, but the hundreds and thousands of victims of priestly betrayal will keep any hope of the good they have done from ever being recognized. What's worse is that this tragic equation includes a God factor. The deepest of pain that this mistrust has created will, quite possibly, never be healed. Both Bonds and the Catholic Church illustrate the simple biblical observation that to whom much is given, much is required. That simple truth is foundational for anyone or any organization that wants to be in the public spotlight.



BYRON D. KLAUS

*Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
President*