

Rector's Essay

By Jarrett Kerbel (10/16/26)

October is a good month to talk about baseball. Our national pastime is heading toward the World Series as I write. What I see when I watch baseball is an incredible multi-cultural ensemble of excellent athletes playing the game at the highest level. Our national game is shared by Central Americans, Mexicans, Dominicans, Cubans, Canadians and Japanese players. For me this is strong evidence that diversity is not a threat to our country but rather an enrichment to be celebrated.

Some fringe "blood and soil" activists are receiving unprecedented amplification through the Christian Nationalist movement and our Vice President. The basic idea is that Americans of Northern European ancestry - or "heritage Americans" - are more American than all other citizens, especially those from the global south. Ludicrous on its face considering the Native Americans who were here for aeons before colonization and the Spaniards who were here hundreds of years before white settlement.

With baseball as my example, I would say all the evidence is that our culture is only enhanced and enriched by diversity and that its basic forms persist even in translation across cultures. Indeed, I would even go so far as to say that athletics should be a source of hope and a prime reason for us to have hope in the capacity of shared culture to balance diversity and assimilation.

The idea of examining diversity through the lens of sport came to me on Saturday while I watched Premier League Soccer on television. Once again we have a sport with roots in Britain that now includes the whole world. Asian, African, American, South Asian, South American, Central American, and Mexican players all play by the same rules while bringing distinctive cultures and styles to the mix. Even Americans are starting to fall in love with Football!

Or take Cricket as an example. My Philadelphia church shared a border with a Cricket Club. On Saturdays and Sundays I would watch people from all over the Commonwealth gather to play on the big green pitch, sporting their Cricket whites and emblems of their countries. That Cricket pitch was the most diverse place in our neighborhood, and the only grumble was that the Pakistanis and Indians were so much better than the people who colonized them and gave them the game in the first place.

And here we find the actual rub. White supremacy and 'blood and soil' are against diversity because it exposes the myth of cultural and ethnic supremacy for what it is, a mighty lie.

As followers of Jesus, we know that no one is 'less than' anyone else and that all people across the globe are our neighbors. When we embrace our neighbors our lives are enriched by their unique experiences of God while we discover the amazing ability of humans to find common ground to contain our differences.