

Catherine Fraser:

Good afternoon everyone. Happy Catholic Schools Week. I hope you're all celebrating. My name is Catherine Fraser and I'm the Chief Development Officer here at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. I'm so excited to welcome you all here today and I really want to thank you for coming to this second annual Ethical Leadership Lunch. The idea for this lunch was born out of a generous gift from Farmers and Merchants Bank who is co-hosting this event today. Thank you so much for bringing the successful event you host in Orange County to the Los Angeles community. The archdiocese would also like to offer our sincere condolences for the loss of Kenneth G. Walker, founding family member and third generation CEO of Farmers and Merchants Bank. God bless you at the bank and your family during this difficult time. We're so proud to have the Walker family and the Farmers and Merchants team here today and we thank them for being on our committee as well as thanking the rest of our event committee. And if I could ask you to stand as we recognize you, we have Ralph Ola, Dave Furman, our amazing brothers, Andrew and Jeff Jenison, Heidi MCN Johnson, Austin mc, Kevin Tiber and Tiffany Roberts and Charlie Smith.

We also want to mention Blake Shinto who could not be here today. Unfortunately, the Shinto family lost their home in the Palisades fire. We have with us today both pastors and principals from Corpus Christi in the Palisades and St. Elizabeth's School and Altadena, our deepest sympathies are with the Shinto family and these parishes in schools and everyone affected by these terrible fires. I want to thank the development staff who helped make this event possible and the task volunteers for running the networking portion of our event. I would also like to thank good gracious catering and all of our servers here today. Thank you to our two bishops, Bishop Albert Beth and Bishop Matt Eloh who are with us today.

I want to thank our amazing panel. I can't wait for you to meet them and hear all of their wisdom. And Carol Costello for moderating again this year. Thank you Carol. This is like the litany of saints. Finally, I have to thank Archbishop Gomez for his unwavering commitment to our Catholic schools and his incredible leadership. Thank you Archbishop. Now without further ado, I want to introduce the Sacred Heart High School Choir who is going to lead us in grace and we can get the lunch portion of our second annual Ethical Leadership Lunch started. Thank you everyone.

Choir:

Every morning, every moment of my life, no matter what nature change, but praying to you, it stays the same. I'm breathing to perfect age. We try to find the way how wonderful You it overwhelms a human. My that I be the I up a lost myself think I could go different, but you cannot out sweet I've ever known how wonderful you are. It overwhelms the human heart that I would be the apple. Thank you so much Jesus needed. Thank you so much, Jesus. The stars up. I'm asking for your to cover, try to find the words to say how wonderful you are. It overwhelms the human that I would be the apple. Love your right. Thank you so much, Jesus. You're all I ever needed. Whoa, whoa. Can you hear us singing? Whoa. Thank.

Catherine Fraser:

Okay. Now that you've had a couple of bites to eat, I'm going to introduce Dan Walker and Kevin Tiber from Farmers and Merchants Bank.

Dan Walker:

Thank you Catherine. Appreciate that. Welcome to the second annual Ethical Leadership Lunch. Farmers Merchants Bank is proud to work with the Archdiocese to bring this conversation and ethics of doing what's right to the forefront of our faith community. I want to acknowledge the devastation of the recent wildfires and its impact on our neighbors, friends, schools, businesses, and churches. We know the ethics of this disaster will be felt for a long time and f and m is committed to being part of the support system that shows up in the following months and years as we rebuild. It is time like these that I reflect the

importance of showing up in everyday actions of our communities and in our faith. My father, Ken Walker, third generation Walker leadership of the bank was a man of deep faith and commitment of what is best and right for the client and the surrounding communities. He passed away on January 19th at the age of 97. We hope to all get to 97. His legacy and faith is lived out through our family, the bank and the numerous projects which we've amplified faith throughout Southern California. Kevin,

Kevin Tiber:

And thank you Dan, and on behalf of the 800 employees of Farmers Emergence Bank, I just want to express our gratitude for allowing us the honor of being your presenting sponsor here in the second year. I'm particularly happy I got to attend. I didn't get to attend last year but had a conflict, so thank you to everybody showing up and supporting the event. I want to thank everybody involved in making this happen. The Archbishop of Los Angeles, your eminence, Archbishop Gomez. Thank you. Thank you for allowing this to happen. Catherine Frazier, who worked very hard behind me, Judy Brooks, Michael Seymour, and the entire team, the entire committee who stood a little bit earlier and we want to thank you for that hard work in bringing this today. I certainly want to thank my dear friend, my longtime friend, Paul Salala. We've talked about this for a long time and bringing it to fruition as fantastic.

I got to see Paul, I know lots of challenges over his last few years as superintendent of schools and we're praying for Paul Daley as he continuing to navigate a difficult situation. This event in particular is important to the bank. It provides a medium for like-minded professionals and leaders to really lean in to their faith and practice their faith in the context of their normal business lives, their daily average lives, and hopefully encouraging ethical leadership practices in harmony with our Catholic church, the dignity of our employees, the pursuit of common good, as well as an effort to always be charitable and we try to incorporate these things and this event gives us the opportunity to really lean in and rally around some of those precepts. Most importantly, the bank has long been a steadfast supporter of Catholic education. I don't believe it's ever been more important than it is today, so we're very proud to be here in support of that mission and supporting the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in that effort. Lastly, I'm proud to report that we will see you back here in 2026. Dan has authorized us to be your presenting sponsor for next year. See you next year.

Catherine Fraser:

So we're going to have a brief video from Farmers and Merchants Bank. Welcome to

Onscreen Video:

F and m Bank, farmers and

Kevin Tiber:

Merchants. Welcome to Farmers and Merchants Bank,

Onscreen Video:

Mal f and m.

Kevin Tiber:

Welcome to f and m Bank.

Onscreen Video:

There's no other company like Farmers and Merchants Bank.

Onscreen Video:

What separates us from the rest is our values. Values that I can relate to day to day,

Dan Walker:

Honesty, integrity, the home, the church and service above self.

Kevin Tiber:

You can trust f and m bankers. You can trust the integrity, you can trust the institution.

Catherine Fraser:

I truly care about our clients and I think they can tell that we truly care about them.

Onscreen Video:

I've always told customers when they come in, I would always shake their hand and say, welcome to the family. We do treat people like they are a neighbor or friend and they are.

Onscreen Video:

We're governed by Christian principles. Primary Christian principle is to love your neighbor, right? You help your fellow man. The bank is trying to give back to the community, is trying to figure out how to serve the local community, do good for the local cities and actually cares. There's actually a huge heart commitment of how do we give back? How does the local community thrive because of that bank that inspires us. That's what we're about.

Onscreen Video:

This is my daytime ministry.

Onscreen Video:

We take it, it was the hand of God that brought us together. It's always easy to work hard

Paul Escala:

For people who deserve it.

Onscreen Video:

I hear from clients all the time as they're searching for banks and find faith-based banking on our website and are thrilled and service their needs. I'm just here to continue to help this bank be the best bank it can be.

Catherine Fraser:

We are so grateful to f and m for their amazing partnership and to all those who sponsored this event, you can see our sponsors both on the screen and in the amazing booklet we have on all the chairs. So please check out our sponsors and thanks again to all of those who supported this event. I want to introduce two of my colleagues who have been working really tirelessly over the past couple of weeks to support our faculty and students. Paula Scala, superintendent of schools, and Doug Cooper, the executive director of the Catholic Education Foundation.

Paul Escala:

Good afternoon, happy Catholic Schools Week. My name is Paul Alala. I'm a senior director superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a proud product of our Catholic schools here in Los Angeles and native born and I'm pleased to be joined by my colleague Doug Cooper, also an alum of our Catholic schools here in Los Angeles and the head of our Catholic Education Foundation. Thank you to our panelists, all of our honored guests and all of our sponsors. I want to note that f and m Bank holds a special place in the heart of our Catholic community in Los Angeles. Not only were they founded in our archdiocese, but at the most critical moment, it was f and M Bank that became our dearest and loyal friend to every ministry, every location in this archdiocese that during the time of the pandemic was facing a catastrophic financial disaster. The potential of losing all of parishioners, our employees was f and m Bank who stood up and within days ensured that every location that needed a PPP loan got it. I want to recognize f and m Bank in this moment and say thank you. Thank you to Kevin, thank you to Dan.

It is indeed in times of difficulty, moments of impossibility that our faith is restored. It is affirmed. Jesus is found in these difficult moments if we seek him, and our hearts and prayers are with the Walter family and the entire family at f and m Bank as you grieve the lut of Mr. Walker. We know that this time for many of us and everyone in this room is likely connected to somebody who woke up just almost a month ago to a disaster that they could not have imagined was going to end up on their doorstep. And for the many Catholic families in this archdiocese with the children who attend our Catholic schools coming in right after Christmas, right after celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and ringing in a new year, they start 2025 under threat of devastation, threat of their lives and their livelihoods.

And indeed this impact has been felt in our archdiocese most deeply and many of you who have answered the call, thank you. We're proud that today's event is going to sponsor and help those children, those families in our Catholic schools who are displaced as a result of these fires. So thank you for being here today. Thank you for ensuring that today's support goes to those families because I want to share a couple of numbers with you before I invite my colleague, Doug Cooper here in the Eaton Fire and in the Palisades Fire, 915 K through 12 students in our Catholic schools attending 76 schools. 76 Catholic schools either lost their home or were dislocated and remain evacuated today, 915, attending 76 Catholic schools, these families who may have lost their home, their livelihoods, their businesses, all of that that they know and they love their home, gone within hours.

Their only home now is their parish and their school. We are grateful to have among those schools, two schools represented today, Corpus Christi, school of Pacific Palisades, and St. Elizabeth of Altadena. Thank you to both of our pastors and principals for being here today in representing all of the families and children who now today do not have their school home and their school parish to attend. As both of those campuses remain closed, as we assess the damage, as we do our environmental cleanup and repairs to see the future, those children are now attending the majority of them other Catholic schools in the region if they remained in this region. And we're blessed to know that at least two thirds of our Corpus Christi families found a new Catholic school, a new home in our ministry at American Martyrs and Martin of Tours among others. Thank you to American Martyrs and to Martin of Tours for welcoming those families for St. Elizabeth. The story is even more impactful, more needy.

The city of Altadena nearly wiped out and the St. Elizabeth family's more physically dispersed. We have multiple schools that these students are now attending school at just to have some normalcy to be able to come back and understand and know God and learn as the best they can. Given all that they've lost St. Rita Assumption, the blessed Virgin Mary St. Philip, the Apostle Holy Family, St. Andrew and many others in the San Gabriel pastoral region have welcomed these families in with open arms. And yet the tuition need for those families exists. Our staff continues to be paid, and yet we continue to look for answers and look for support to ensure that we can keep our ministers employed and continue to form the hearts of children in our faith and for the love of Christ. With over \$7 million in need now for tuition assistance, I'm pleased to have my colleague and my friend Doug Cooper, who will share some thoughts and some words with you on behalf of the Catholic Education Foundation. Doug,

Doug Cooper:

Thank you. Thank you Paul. And thank you to Catherine Frazier and Judy Brooks and Archbishop Gomez and your talented team for hosting this wonderful event today. As mentioned, I'm Doug Cooper and it is my privilege to serve as the executive director of the Catholic Education Foundation in Truth. In addition to our shared commitment to ethical leadership, there is one constant factor that brings us all together here today, and that is our united belief that a Catholic education is an advantage for life. In addition to an academically stimulating curriculum, it is our Catholic schools that teach values of faith, family, service, and community. For more than 35 years, the Catholic Education Foundation has been committed to providing tuition assistance to the most financially deserving students. Attending Catholic elementary and high schools throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, spanning the counties of Santa Barbara Ventura and Los Angeles. It is a priority that a Catholic education remain accessible and affordable for any student that wants one.

During these past few weeks, the recent wildfires causing unprecedented destruction across our archdiocese, have affected our Catholic schools, their communities, families and students. And in collaboration with Paul and the Department of Catholic Schools, the Catholic Education Foundation has created the wildfire Catholic School tuition Relief fund to assist students who have been impacted by the wildfires. As Paul was mentioning, it's estimated that hundreds of families from Corpus Christi School located in Pacific Palisades and St. Elizabeth of Hungary school and Altadena alone have lost their homes in the Palisades and Eaton wildfires. Countless students from other Catholic school communities in our archdiocese who were living in the various wildfire zones and had to evacuate, may not be able to return to their homes or their Catholic school. As families are addressing housing and other basic necessities, there must not be a concern for our students to remain in our Catholic schools in our archdiocese.

As such, I'm pleased to announce that proceeds from today's luncheon will be directed to the Wildfire Catholic School Tuition Relief Fund. I ask you to kindly consider a donation to the fund today. You will see envelopes at your tables, and there is also a QR code provided. If that is more convenient, as we keep all of our students and their families in our prayers, let us come together to ensure that our students could continue to receive a Catholic education and that blessing remain a constant in their lives during this challenging time, let us remember the inspiring words of St. Francis of Assisi where there is despair, hope, where there is darkness, light, and where there is sadness, joy, please join me in being the hope, light and joy for our students. Thank you, and it is now my pleasure to introduce our moderator today, Carol Costello. Thank you very much.

Carol Costello:

Thank you very much. Please enjoy dessert as we assemble on the stage and we'll get going. We have a fascinating discussion that will soon get underway, so I can't wait for you to hear the observations of our panel.

Speaker 13:

Check microphone on. They're all

Carol Costello:

Muted right now because we don't want to get the chin. You want me to introduce them into this micro? You certainly can, yes. Okay. Is it on now? Yes. Okay. Okay. It is time to get underway. I am going to introduce our panelists right now. I'm Carol Costello. Thank you for coming today. Okay. Are you all ready for the introduction of our panelists? Here goes. Welcome to the stage Alessandra DeSanto, who's the co-founder of Hallow After Lented became the number one Catholic app in the world. Yes, much applause because this is an app that allows you to pray and meditate on scripture and it's enormously popular. Our next panelist is Anne Sweeney. She currently serves on the board of directors of Netflix and

the board of trustees at the Mayo Clinic and JP Getty Trust, but that's just a fraction of what she's accomplished. She was co-chair of Disney Media Networks, president of Disney, A BC television group, and she was also president of the Disney Channel. Thank you. Thank you for being here. Ann, also on our panel, Renata Simil, go Lions, an LMU grad talk about public service. Renata is simply amazing. She's held high level positions with the LA Dodgers, the LA Times. She was deputy mayor for economic development in the hot administration. She serves on so many boards. It would take me, I don't know, a half hour to list them all. She's also president and CEO of LA 84, which empowers kids through sports. Thank you for being here.

Also on our panel. I'm so excited about this. Joe Davis is the lead play-by-play announcer of the LA Dodgers. He also calls games for Major League Baseball in the NFL. He's the main play-by-play announcer for the World Series and for all star games. Joe, thank you so much for being with us. Okay. Okay. Can everybody hear me okay? I know the feedback is coming through though, Mike,

Onscreen Video:

Carol Costello:

There it goes. Okay. Okay, now we are ready to begin. Thank you all for being with us today. I'm really excited to have this conversation. Before we get underway, I would like to thank all of you for your philanthropic work, especially for your efforts to assist people in need in our city. It is a tough time. I know that all of you have helped those in need who've lost so much in the wildfire, so thank you for giving back and thank you for your compassion. I kind of want to focus on that word compassion just for a second because it's so needed today, right? Compassion, integrity, social responsibility, faith, faith. How do those attributes drive us? What does our faith require? What do we owe others? See, Rena, I was listening to you, right? And love, is it still possible to lead with love in these uncertain times?

My hope is that all of you will bring clarity to what it means to be Catholic in the professional world and what it means to exercise your faith in a world that's experiencing cultural change and at times seems so whatever the opposite of compassion is. So we're going to be talking a lot about sports and a lot about entertainment, but I want to focus on faith in general for just a second because I think we need faith at this moment in time. So I'm going to start with you, Alessandro, because you literally left a job on Wall Street based totally on faith in developing the app, hallow, and I'm just going to ask you Ann for just a second. So if Alessandro approached you and say, Hey, I want to develop this app called Hallow and it's about prayer and meditation, what would you have said?

Anne Sweeney:

I would've said, where's this? What's motivating you? Where's this coming from? Not are you crazy? No, I've heard a lot of crazy That's That's investor talk or no, by the way, that's investor talk. No, I've heard a lot of crazy in my life and people come up with wild ideas and if someone came up to me 30 years ago and said, Hey, what if I gave you a box and a keyboard and you could talk to anybody in the world, you could send messages everywhere, anywhere. What would we have said? Really? We're like crazy. I think we've learned to hopefully we've learned to be more accepting and to ask, where's this coming from?

Carol Costello:

So where did that come from, that faith, I mean faith fits in with so many aspects about what you've developed with Hallow. So what said to you, I got to do this app because people want to pray?

Alessandro DiSanto:

Yeah, so there's a 30 minute version of the answer to that question, but two minute version is how it does not exist because we try to sit down and come up with a really good idea or ask what the world needed. It was very much the unexpected result of our own spiritual journeys. So I'm one of three co-founders, founding team of six that were all friends that went to college together and went into very different career paths. I went to New York, was working on Wall Street, was an investor, others went into consulting, government service, one went to the seminary marketing and a couple of years out of school we were catching up on the weekends as friends and talking about life. And we realized that there was one of two really big sets of issues that we were going through. My co-founder, Alex and half of the group had gone through the traditional falling away experience in and through high school and college and were living agnostic.

Atheist lives in big cities doing what millennials increasingly do, and they were really asking the questions of like, is God real? He, Alex, my co-founder then best friend now co-founder was getting married to an amazing Catholic woman and was going through Pre-Cana. So everyone that always knocks Pre-Cana experiences, this was a good one. And he said, well, if I'm going to commit to raising a family and raising this family Catholic, I might as well figure out do I actually believe in God? Which is a solid this is point. Yeah. First solid question. And being a McKinsey consultant was like, I'm going to break down this market. I'm going to figure out what is true. But the intellectual experience and grappling with it didn't really connect for him. It was this idea that, well, I'm supposed to be able to talk to him and have a personal relationship with him and if I can then he must be real, and if I can't, then everything I've been told about him is not true.

So why don't I just try and talk to the guy? So for him and that part of the friend group, it was really a does God exist for me? In the other half of the group raised Catholic, I was raised Italian Catholic. My mom was born and raised in Italy. So we grew up very sometimes in that order, Italian Catholic, which sounds like people know what that means, but that meant Catholic grade school, high school, and ultimately college did very well academically and never had a falling away experience. Took Aquinas as my confirmation saying big feast day yesterday. But I somehow confused the experience of theology with faith

And I could tell you all the things, but I didn't know the person of Christ. And so in these two very different ways, we were asking this question of on the one hand is God even there and on the other, what does it mean to actually know him or find purpose in life? And in that, and here are the longer stories, I'll skip over ask the question, how do we actually come to know God and God's will for our life and for us, that took us through the journey of learning how to pray. And it was in discerning how to pray that we discerned a call to go help the world figure out the things that we were learning in our own lives and walked in one day on a Monday morning to my partner's office to quit, to go build a prayer app, which in finance is what we call an ROI negative decision.

Carol Costello:

So how many people use your app?

Alessandro DiSanto:

It's been pretty wild. So we launched in December of 2018, just over six years ago, the app's been downloaded just over 22 million times. We are available in eight languages and people have prayed using the app over 750 million times across 150 countries.

Carol Costello:

So that's amazing. Praise to God. Wow. So Renata, obviously that means people want to engage with God, which is kind of not popular so much today, right? So what does that say to you

Renata Simril:

In the context of me as a person or in the context of me in the sports world? Interesting. As a person, I think I take it to mean people are desperate for meaning and for connection to a higher purpose. I watched a CBS news clip, CBS morning, and it was around faith and religion and there was a statistic that they shared that seven out of 10 Americans wouldn't consider themselves religious, but they would consider themselves spiritual. And as I reflected on that, because I often say the same thing, I was raised Catholic, I went through confirmation. My mother was Catholic, my grandmother was Catholic. It was very strong underpinning of our family for our faith values. And I struggled with as science and technology gets you to think about was God real? Is the story of Bible real? Is Jesus, did he? All of those things that are bubbling up is what do you anchor?

How do you anchor your faith when there are more questions and there are answers? And I actually had an epiphany with my table mate for lunch that said the answer is in the questions. And so always questioning, always discerning, always learning, and then rooted in those values that are about respect, those values that are about seeing God in others, empathy, seeing yourself in others being in service of a greater good. And I think faith underpins that in a sense that we don't have the answers, but we have to have the faith that if we walk of value driven life, that it will lead us there and that it hopefully will inspire others to be led there too.

Carol Costello:

That's very Jesuit. I like that. Go lions. Go lions. Joe, is it easy to have faith in light of what all Los Angeles has suffered in figuring out why such things happen?

Joe Davis:

No softball to start.

Carol Costello:

Okay know, I thought she was going to talk about sports and entertainment. We'll get there. I promise. I'm just getting the faith thing.

Joe Davis:

No, and I don't think that. I think just inherently faith is not easy. That's why it's faith, right? If it was something that we knew to be true, we factually knew to be true, it'd be easy. It'd be like, okay, is this blue? Sure, is this white? Sure. We all agree on that, but I think that faith by definition takes a leap to really to practice your faith and to have it be a big part of what do and in times like this, especially to believe that it's going to be okay, there's a trust element there for things that you can't see right in front of you. So I don't know if I'm talking in circles answering that, but that was a tough one to start, Karen.

Carol Costello:

I know. Well, I figured you're a good talker so you could handle it. You like to think in the moment, right? Yeah, yeah, it was just like that, right?

Onscreen Video:

Carol Costello:



Season though. I like that you mentioned the struggle because Anne, we talked a bit about that and it is a struggle to say to yourself that I don't know, is this all happening for a reason and what is that reason? And we may never know.

Onscreen Video:

Onscreen Video:

Anne Sweeney:

Now. I have looked less for the reason and I have looked more for what can I do because that's where I find comfort is in jumping in and doing. And it also speaks to a piece that I would add to Renata, which is community. And at times we're all at different stages in our journey with faith, but there are times when you may feel like you're lapsing, but it's your community that carries you forward. It's that community that is there for you. And the community never really leaves you. It really just continues to grow around you. So at times like this, I'm not asking what started the fire. I have very little time for who's to blame, but I have all the time in the world for what can we do, how can we help? How can we restore people's faith in their community, faith in their schools, faith in their families.

Joe Davis:

I think from that, people thinking that way gives meaning to all the suffering that the city's going through. And that's not, look, I couldn't be luckier to be healthy and my home is fine, so I'm very sensitive saying this, but the meaning to the suffering can be that we all come together and grow closer and show these people that have gone through such terrible things, like just incomprehensible things that we're there for 'em. And I think that the word community that you brought up, I've felt that as much as ever this last month just seeing at our parish Holy Family and seeing with my friends around Pasadena, how everybody's come together and even if it's not a close friend, you're seeing people that just know these people that have been affected by the fires reaching out and letting them know that they're there and all this terrible. There is zero good about it, but when you can focus the galvanizing nature of it and the good that comes out of the way people are responding to help, that's at least some meaning to take from this mess that people are living through.

Renata Simril:

Carol, if I could really quickly just to add to that, it's really interesting. I have dear friends in both Altadena and Pacific Palisades, and I think what's special about these two places is they did have a sense of community. They're town square, Palisades Park, the library, the 4th of July parties, the Christmas parties in both communities. They're similar in that way. And I was at a lunch earlier this week for some of the philanthropic community and I engaged a conversation with the person who's not from either one of those communities, but he made reference to this sense of wanting to come together and be in community. And he said, it is odd because I've lived in my neighborhood for seven years and I don't even know my neighbor. And I'm hearing a lot of that the fires and the response to the fires in terms of wanting to be in community has caused a lot of us to question why did the fires happen? If you believe in God, why would God bring this destruction to these two communities? The loss of life, the loss of property, the loss of memories. And so you're searching for an answer and it's also causing one to look at themselves to say, am I not being in community with my neighbor?

And it affected him as he was sharing that he now says hi to his neighbors. I was at a gas station and getting gas the other day and just unbeknown minding my own business, pumping my gas, and the guy

gets out to do something and he says, good morning. And it startled me for a moment, man, that he actually saw me and we engaged in conversation. So I do think that there is a ripple effect to what we're seeing in Los Angeles that is causing people to perhaps question their faith and question their responsibility to be in community. Because at the end of the day, I think that is what drives me as a person is that we are all men and women in service of others. And if you can't say hi to your neighbor, how can you be in service to others?

Carol Costello:

I think the way the world is right now, that we're in a blame game, we like to point the fingers of blame. It's your fault. No, it's your fault. No, it's their fault. It's never my fault. And I just wondered how people of faith can get around that because it's easy to fall into the game, right? It's easy to play that game.

Alessandro DiSanto:

I assume that's a question of some kind. Yeah, I mean you asked in kind of your opening kind of words like what does faith ask of us? And I think Christ asks us one thing for only one thing and that's for everything. And that's really hard. I often meditate on the beatitudes

And the first I actually think is not one of the beatitudes. And I think the last is actually not one of the beatitudes. I think it's the requirement to get into the others. And the last one is what you're going to get. And the first one is, blessed are the poor and spirit for theirs as a kingdom of heaven. In order for us to really enter into the following of the way of Christ, he doesn't promise the conclusion. He doesn't promise the answers. What is he? He is the way, the truth in the life. It is a journey. We have to recognize that nothing we have we deserve,

Whether it's our relationships, our families, our communities, our physical things, none of that is earned. Everything is a gift. And I think that's what is meant by recognizing that at the level of spirit, you are poor, you are completely dependent on your very existence on God. Without God there is no existence. And I think that's the necessary posture with which we need to approach all things in life. And so that's kind of the door to the beatitudes. And then the last one, after you get through the list in the middle, those are those who are persecuted from my names sake. And that's pretty much the promise of if you do all the other things, what's going to happen? You're going to be persecuted for belief in God. And so we need to recognize that nothing we have is ours. We fundamentally have to have a posture of gratitude and gift for all that we have both the blessings and the sufferings, the constellation and the desolation to use some of the Jesuit language. And if we do that, we know things aren't going to be perfect, but that's the commitment that Christ asks from us. And so I know that's not really an answer, but I think the way in which we pursue those things is to be thankful for what we have and to ask, how can I follow you? And the answer for each one of us is different.

Carol Costello:

So Anne, can you translate that into the business world?

Anne Sweeney:

Yes, I can. No, I

Can't. Well, what I'm hearing is that we are all imperfect. We know that about ourselves. And Carolyn, you mentioned the blame game. My answer to the blame game is to listen. Because somewhere in hearing this blaming, there are things you haven't thought about. Someone is trying to tell you something about what's going on in the world or hopefully needs to happen in the world and what you can do in this world. And Alessandro, I love the Beatitudes. I live by them. I think about them. I talk to my children about them. I've talked to my Monsignor about them. You're right, it does lay out the map. It really does lay out our faith. But going back to the blame just on the business side of things or what we've been hearing in

listening to in the last couple of years or decade, I think we need to be careful not to shove it aside because it's blame, but instead to listen even more carefully and use that to help us figure out what we need to do and what needs to happen for the greater good of our community. And I think, again, that's sounds

Onscreen Video:

Anne Sweeney:

Sounds impossible, but I think we do know that things are very hard, but very few things are impossible. So I

Renata Simril:

Heard that the problem is we've shifted from, and I'm going to use a sports analogy if you will, I truly believe that every kid should not get a trophy for showing up to their game. And what I also heard was where are the value sets and where do you get value sets? So if you go back to the statistics, seven in 10 Americans don't see themselves as religious, they're spiritual. That ask the question in my mind is where are you grounded in your values? If I look at the work that we do at the L 84 Foundation, which is about helping kids become life ready through sports, I'd say that it's become much harder for us to as individuals accept personal responsibility because they haven't been grounded in those values, that there's not a safe place to fail, that there is this judgment that's passed on you.

And so your tendency is to I got to be perfect. I got to be perfect. And if I have to acknowledge a mistake, what's going to come to me as a result of that? And when you think about the sport context or a team for a team to be successful, that you as an individual have to bring your particular skillset and you have to bring your best self to the team, but you can't win on your own. You have to win with those players that are around you, be it a basketball team or a baseball team, and that you have a coach and hopefully trained through a partner of the L 84 foundation on the youth development skills, not the win at all cost mentality, but if you have a well-trained coach, this is about bringing the best in the athlete and the team, then you are able to establish values of character, of resiliency, of learning to win with grace and weather defeat. And I think the statistic is 74% of women in the C-suite have played sports at one point in their life, 70%. And so I think that there is a direct correlation to personal responsibility, accountability, and the values that you stand on as a person or as a leader. And the question is, where are there places for people to establish those values in the home, in the church, in a sports context?

Joe Davis:

It's interesting you say it in a sports context because it's amazing to me how many athletes are overt in their faith, they express it freely on national television. I thank God for this game and they do it in a way that other professionals do not. And Joe, I wondered if you noticed that and what you make of it.

Yeah, I think that the first guy I think of is Clayton Kershaw, who is one of the greatest ever to do his job

Onscreen Video:

Left-handed

Joe Davis:

Pitcher, right? And if you asked him, he would tell you the reason that he was made to be a baseball player. And the reason that he met his wife Ellen, was to have a platform and have a person to help people. So that's the first example I think of. And then kind of tying into what you're talking about with

having values as your foundation, as your fuel to drive your purpose. When I think about athletes sharing their faith, I think that they say that money doesn't change you, it amplifies who you are.

I think this is an example of success doesn't necessarily change you, it amplifies who you are. So I think what you're seeing when you're seeing these athletes share their faith, I think you're seeing a big reason why they are who they are, not. They became famous and successful, so now they're going to share their faith. I think that that faith has been there as a foundation helping probably propel them to the excellence that's given 'em that platform to share the faith. I think that to get to where you, to reach any form of excellence, you got to have clarity. That is the most underrated thing, clarity and vision of where you want to go. You don't end up Clayton Kershaw in position to share that faith if that's not a big part of who you are all the way coming up.

Carol Costello:

I just wonder if it's something in the way athletes are coached because do they start as children believing very strongly in their faith and then it lasts all through their lives into adulthood? I know that you work with some of the Boston Celtics on prayer. Have you ever asked them about it?

Alessandro DiSanto:

I'm very much at the beginning of a parenting journey. I brought the boys, we got Giovanni and Vincenzo on the socks. We're keeping the Italian going, going. That's only a powerful dodge to the question. Yeah, I actually was thinking as Joe was talking some of the words that basically just came out of his mouth. I think it's in the pursuit of excellence, that one, you need to have some value system. And I think it is obvious for many other athletes and people that are successful that you can create an internal structure where you are God. And I think many athletes go down that path. But you do need to have, I think, absolute clarity, focused determination and execution to reach any level of greatness in any field, especially sports. I think part of what makes the sports experience so clear and motivating is that there is a scoreboard, right?

You have that obvious feedback loop of did we win or lose the game? And I think that's often something we struggle with in life. You can feel a drift without that scoreboard. And I think our faith kind of reorients us away from scoreboard towards relationship with Christ. And that's a whole separate thing. But I think for those that are successful in a way where they amplify that foundational humility that Joe was pointing towards, and we see this, you mentioned the Celtics coach, Missoula does some content on the app, and he is absolutely steadfast in his faith. And I think the thing that I've learned from him, and this was in some of the national press this past year when they won, there is only one thing he does before the game, and he walks the court with his rosary and praises the rosary. So I am always very clear that faith is not a magic eight ball where it's like if we win, God, listen to me. And if we lose, God did not listen. And I'm feeling that in a unique way as a Notre Dame football fan right

Speaker 13:

Alessandro DiSanto:

We offer the effort and we let the fruit fall where it may. That's what it means to surrender to God's will. And I think you see that very clearly in athletes because of the scoreboard and the clear light that's on that stage.

Carol Costello:

I just want to read quote from speaking of Notre Dame, Ohio State, the quarterback of the Ohio State Buckeyes Will Howard said after the game, before I say anything, I got to give my Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ, all the glory, all the praise. Amen. He added so glad God gave me a chance to be a Buckeye. I don't know. That was like a step too far for me. Anne. I mean, does God

Anne Sweeney:

Care that you're a Buckeye? Well, obviously someone thinks so. It's a personal expression, but I was thinking about that expression of faith when you were talking to Joe about Clayton Kershaw and you and I'd had a conversation about we don't see that as much in entertainment. I think we see it in the award shows. Many people get up during the Grammys or the Emmys or the Oscars, and thank their God they're fewer award shows than there are baseball games. That's

Onscreen Video:

An understatement.

Anne Sweeney:

And live Exactly. And live events. So I don't think we see a lot of that just because of that constraint. But I also wonder if people feel that if they express their faith, are they keeping someone out because they're expressing their faith, but also they're speaking about their religion? Is that, and it's a question for me, not a statement, but does that divide people or does that encourage people? Or how do we encourage people to use those moments to come together to understand each other?

Carol Costello:

That is a tough question because you don't hear many sports stars saying thanks to awa, right? Or if sports stars express themselves politically

They have in the past, that's frowned upon. But the Christian religion is not, I don't know. I mean, how does the NFL look at that? Not that he run the NFL or anything, or on behalf of Mr. Goodell, this is where we stand. You're a handy person to ask right now, but you don't have to answer it if you don't want, because who knows? But I was just curious because whenever an athlete says something like, I want to thank my God for making that catch in the end zone on my tiptoes, the broadcaster always doesn't know what to say. They'll just go, no.

Joe Davis:

Yeah, and to your point, I am sitting there thinking, yeah, it's a thing, right? And I don't think it's just sharing faith. I think it's like anytime, if you're a person in the spotlight, you have to think about what you say. It's a bummer that you have to think about sharing your faith because it is a dividing thing. That's just where we are. I don't think that's, I don't know. Yeah,

Onscreen Video:

Yeah. No, that's a hard one, right?

Onscreen Video:

Yeah.

Renata Simril:

I've been sitting here reflecting on your question, and I was thinking about an interview after one of the NFL championship games, and it was the NFL does their Walter Peyton Man of the Year. And so one of the athletes who were nominated for the was being interviewed, and the commentator was talking to him about his skillset, and it is a running bag. I can't remember who it was. And he was focusing on his talent

on the field. And he says, no, you're asking the wrong question. He says that God gave me these abilities. He says, but I have to, am I using my word, not his repay God for being on service and using my platform for good? That's why I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm not doing what I'm doing and being recognized as a Walter Payton man of the Year because of what I do on the field. That's a God-given talent. What really matters is how do I use that talent and how do I use that platform to improve the lives of others? So I think as I'm reflecting on your question, I, I'm going to pay more attention because it's actually a good thing right now we're in church and that they're inspiring and walking the way and inviting others and perhaps inspiring others to walk the way too.

Alessandro DiSanto:

That's awesome. Can I take a stab at something? At the risk of being spicy,

Onscreen Video:

Let's go.

Alessandro DiSanto:

We ran a Super Bowl ad this past year, and there's technically some language around the NFL advertising policy to not include religious imagery. We kind of worked around that and included some religious imagery and we're able to make that work. And as a result, you alluded to this in the introduction, that was Super Bowl Sunday, immediately proceeded Ash Wednesday by the end of that week, how it was the number one app and the app store across all categories, both TikTok, Netflix, Hulu, apologies, all the things. No, that's not a story about how great how is, but I think there has been an impulse over the past couple decades at risk of speaking beyond my human existence to optimize for the least common denominator out of an impulse to maximizing Tam or whatever. You don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable. So everything becomes the same and blanded down. I think there is an opportunity instead of creating strategy and invitation that runs away from fear, that runs towards joy. And there's some maybe mixed examples there with Bud Light and

Onscreen Video:

Tastes great.

Alessandro DiSanto:

There is commercial power in creating a real vision of what truth is and advancing towards that in a way that owns who we are. And I think there's a way do that in love. Love is what we are called to, God is love, and it's our number one corporate value of love. And we describe it very specifically. We use Aquinas's definition, love is to will the good of the other. That has very little to do with you, but it does require you to actually know the person. And there is humility to the point of listening to say, I want to understand you, to know you, but to build towards your good. And again, as a young parent that may not be having ice cream for dinner and staying up past bedtime, there is mercy in love as well as justice. But I think running towards owning a truth that we believe in is not going to reduce our tam, reduce our reaches of faith, but actually bringing fullness of Christ to the world. And that is ultimately what we're called to do.

Renata Simril:

You mentioned the word joy. I'm a purveyor of hope and a Pi Piper for joy in the work that I do. And I think sports is such a unique platform for community and for joy. And I'm always mind boggled when the Dodgers won the World Series Championship last year, round of Class Dodgers, you go to the game and when you buy that strip of tickets, usually the people in your section are people you've never met, I've

never met before. And instantaneously there is a shared value, there is a love, there is joy for your team being in the World Series, and you develop this bond with those people that are with you. You win high fiving, hugging, you lose a point, you're crying together consoling one another. I mean, it's just think about it. It's like church. It's like church. And so perhaps these athletes, again are using their platform to bring us together in community to see the joy and the love of the other. The question becomes why doesn't that perpetuate outside the stadium or the basketball court or whatever?

Carol Costello:

I am just curious, Joe, whether you recognize that when you're, especially at a game like the World Series, when everyone's praying for Freddy Freeman to hit that home run on the bottom of the 10th inning.

Onscreen Video:

Yeah,

Onscreen Video:

Your call was amazing.

Joe Davis:

Thank you. Yeah, I think it's part of what makes sports great is the, back to the word community. It fosters a sense of community. You can become best friends of the pertinent person sitting next to you. You don't know what their religion is that's forgotten. You don't know where they're from, you don't know their political beliefs, none of that matters. It's all brought together by sports. It's a galvanizing thing. So yeah, I think that's part of what makes sports special.

Carol Costello:

So when you were, I'm just going to go back to that call because it was so amazing. So Gibe Meet Freddy, which was a shout out to Kirk Gibson from 1988 who kind of did the same thing. You came up with that in the moment because you didn't know that Freddy Freeman was going to hit a home run on the bottom of the 10th with his bump ankle. So how do you do that? How do you come up with that? Isn't the MLB going to trademark that?

Joe Davis:

How about this? Yeah, the next morning somebody sent me a link, MLB, trademarks, Gibby Meet Freddy. I'm like, I kind of want to be mad, but I'm thinking that if it's being done, they can do it. So I'm not going to be mad. It seems kind of weird,

Onscreen Video:

But is it ethical, right?

Joe Davis:

Granada, I need to hire you go to bat for me, man. All these T-shirts flying around, I'm not getting nothing. I didn't even get a t-shirt.

Carol Costello:

But how do you do that in the moment? Because that is God-given talent.

Joe Davis:

Thank you. So specific to that, not to get too inside baseball or nerdy on it, but our crew had been covering the Dodgers all postseason, and I obviously am with them throughout the regular season too. And so we had watched Freddy Freeman hobbled on anybody had a ball out of the infield. The guy didn't have an extra base hit since September going into the World Series. So you're thinking as you live this journey with the team, man, he's got the Gibson thing comes up in your head, you see the comparisons, and then you get into the World Series. It's game one. For those of you that don't know Kurt Gibson, 1988 game, one of the World Series, his only at Bat of the World Series, he had two bad legs, hit a game winning walk off home run. All right, so now it's game one.

We've watched Freddy be hobbled the entire postseason game, one like Freddy Chance to win it. So it's like all these things coming together and in these big moments, which is where you have to be good if you're going to do this job and do it right, you have to be at your best in those big moments. I'm not smart enough to just be like pow. Like, yeah, that's the call. It's not just going to pop right into my head. It's trying to keep all that context in mind and leaning forward into those moments, anticipating that that moment could happen. That's not scripting it. I am not scripting a call for that, but I'm thinking of the Kurt Gibson comparison. I'm thinking that it's Game one of the World Series. I'm thinking that he's been hobbled all postseason long. And then the flight of the ball was identical to Kurt Gibson's home run. And so all those things came together. And I guess, I don't know that I've ever necessarily thought of it this way, but that's a way that God kind of works through me. I don't know how, it's all those things that, all the work I've done and everything, but then in the moment to have it just sort of let it happen. It's a confluence of the work and then it something else.

Carol Costello:

That's awesome. That's really awesome. We only have a couple of more minutes, but I really want to get into the Hollywood religion thing because I do think there are more faith-based shows being produced and put on Netflix. Many. The one that comes to mind right now that I'd like to get into a little bit is Mary, did any of you see Mary? Yeah. It was sort of this dramatization of the Virgin Mary. And when I learned about the Virgin Mary, she was nice Virgin Mary who was a virgin, and you didn't really learn much else about her because frankly, there's not much in the Bible about the Virgin Mary. But this show sort of turned her into this beautiful rebel. And Joseph was cute and they met cute across the lake.

Onscreen Video:

I got to watch this.

Onscreen Video:

It's kind of like hot

Onscreen Video:

Sand

Carol Costello:

In it. Exactly. And I was just wondering from your perspective whether that's a good thing or a bad thing to embellish stories from the Bible to sell the show.

Anne Sweeney:

Well, I can't speak to everyone as a member of the programming team because I'm not as a board member. I represent the shareholders. So any opinions I have are personal. But after we spoke, I watched



Mary and it occurred to me that what you had said to me was, right. There isn't a lot written about her. And that happens in many books. You have one character who's really interesting and powerful, but we don't get a lot of detail. So storytellers, embellish storytellers, add the detail. And I was heartened to see Mary. We knew she was a brave woman, but no one ever said it in those terms. And I think as we look at the many, many, many shows that have been produced that are faith-based or based on the 10 Commandments, probably everyone in the room has seen that for decades it was on A, B, C. That's embellished as well. And sometimes that helps people connect with the story, with their faith, with their religion. It gives them a different idea. But we have to remember it's a storyteller out there and that is in their imagination and they are looking at the characters that we grew up with at CCD or in Catholic school and this is how they are seeing them.

Carol Costello:

It can be so powerful because remember we bring up of another show The Chosen. How many of you seen The Chosen? A lot of people, 250 million people have seen The Chosen. It's a series about Jesus and the lead actor is Jonathan Rumi. And whenever he goes anywhere, he is swarmed by fans who think he is Jesus. And I know Jonathan Rumi. So what is it like to be with him when fans surround him?

Alessandro DiSanto:

It's pretty wild. I've definitely spent time around him with him in those contexts and I would not want to be him. I mean it's really a lot. And he's talked about there was extended, I dunno if anyone listens to the Daily or Reads the New York Times, but he did an extended interview that's worth reading or listening to on this. I was with my woman came up was like, please give him this gift I made. And my daughter just named her son Jonathan Dallas after him and Dallas the producer, executive producer and creator of the Chosen. I mean that's like next level. So he is extremely humble and it's been a heavy spiritual weight on him and he has turned to his faith in a really deep way. And he's talked about it a lot. I encourage you to listen to his talk from the National Eucharistic Congress this past summer in Indianapolis, US reflecting a little bit on it, but I think I have not seen Mary seen the chosen. I think there is certainly a fair focus on wanting to make sure these things that are so deeply emotionally connecting to our hearts and in some ways helping us lead into relationship in understanding God and salvation history, that we aren't intentionally or unintentionally forming doctrinal opinions that maybe aren't super, super focused.

Carol Costello:

I'm going to interject for just a second because I want to read this quote from Jonathan Rumi. He says them, the fans swarm him. And the reason he says that they do this is he is the closest thing to the real Jesus they will ever see. They want him, this actor to be Jesus. People ask him to perform miracles and pray with them. They bring their disabled family members and he is heavy duty Catholic. I mean, he thinks that God gave him this role and that he has a responsibility as a Catholic to portray Jesus responsibly.

Alessandro DiSanto:

For sure.

Carol Costello:

That's kind of scary to me that people would see him that way is kind of scary. Don't you think?

Alessandro DiSanto:

I agree that that is a heavy cross to bear. I think it is an occasion of hope and a challenge to everyone in this room.

Speaker 15:

That's right.

Alessandro DiSanto:

I think we believe in our faith that all beauty points towards truth and goodness. And I think one of the reasons why the Chosen Mary, all of these different media, high level media productions on salvation history are connecting so deeply is because we live in a deeply wounded world in need of love, forgiveness, and mercy.

Speaker 15:

That's right.

Alessandro DiSanto:

We are all called to bring the face of Christ to all of those in our lives. And if we don't live up to being Jonathan, for every person we come in contact with, we are putting all the weight to the cross on him and not carrying any of it ourselves. And that's what I think about when I think about the chosen. I'm never going to be on a TV show hopefully, but we need to bring that tenderness, the supporting and the truth filled, justified face of God to the people we encounter. And if we all do this in our schools, in our homes and our families, the world will be a different place.

Carol Costello:

I think that's a good way to end our talk. Thanks to all of you. This was just amazing and wonderful and thanks to all of you for coming and listening and participating in this event. So I hope I see you next year. Thank you.

Speaker 13:

Nice.