



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 1, 2021

To the Catholic Youth Organization Coaches, Parents, Families and Players of Long Island:



Tom Konchalski
Photo used with the permission of
Steve Konchalski.

On September 10, 2021, I attended an evening of tribute for a man named Tom Konchalski at Archbishop Molloy High School.¹

Tom Konchalski is a legend of the New York basketball world. He worked with Howard Garfinkel, who was recently inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, as well as at the Five-Star Basketball Camp. Tom also published his highly sought-after *High School Basketball Illustrated* college scouting report. He will most likely be inducted in the near future.

Tom saw his work in basketball as “a ministry” of Catholic evangelization. His integrity, honesty, excellence, humility and charity were a light of

Christ and the mission of the Catholic Church to basketball coaches at every level, the parents, the players and the many communities, Catholic and non-Catholic, that he served.

So many coaches – Coach Mike Krzyzewski of Duke, Coach John Calipari of Kentucky, Coach Phil Martelli – have spoken eloquently of Konchalski’s friendship, his influence, the quality and charity of his talent evaluations and his ethical integrity. They have even called him “a saint.”

¹ The New York Times: [Tom Konchalski, Dogged Basketball Scout, Dies at 74 - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/sports/basketball/tom-konchalski-dies.html) [Legendary Basketball Scout Tom Konchalski Should Be Named To Naismith Hall Of Fame \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevekonchalski/2021/09/10/legendary-basketball-scout-tom-konchalski-should-be-named-to-naismith-hall-of-fame/)

In having the privilege of saying a few words and offering an Invocation at his tribute on September 10th, I wrote and delivered the following:

“What was Tom Konchalski’s humble secret? Why was he such a ‘Five Star’ rock of integrity, honesty and excellence in the basketball world he loved?

A very substantial part of the answer to these questions comes from J.R.R. Tolkien who once wrote some words that could have easily come from Tom: ‘...I put before you the one great thing to love on earth – the Blessed Sacrament, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. There you will find true romance, true honor, true glory and the true way of all your loves upon earth.’²

Tom was a daily communicant which means that he went to the Catholic Mass not only faithfully on Sunday but every day of the week. The Body and Blood of Christ and the Catholic Mass were at the heart and center of his life. He lived the rhythm of the Mass and it was the foundation of his witness of integrity and excellence in and to the basketball world.

If we are Catholic and for some reason far from the Eucharist and the Mass, may we, as we anticipate tomorrow’s 20th Anniversary commemoration of 9/11 and pray for the souls that died that day, remember Tom’s shining humble face gently beckoning and gently encouraging us in friendship to come back to the Altar of Sacrifice and the unbloody renewal of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary celebrated at every Mass.

And for Tom’s many ecumenical, interfaith, agnostic and atheist friends, may his shining faith inspire each of us to direct our lives more deeply to God.

Let us pray:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

We thank you for the gift of holiness and the humble Catholic missionary spirit Tom Konchalski always brought and continues to bring to the gyms, the camps, the tournaments, the talent evaluations, the buses, the subways, the diners and all ‘the peripheries’ of the basketball world.

² As quoted in James T. O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 336-337.

May the Word of God be 'a lamp for our steps and a light for our path' (Ps. 119) as it was always for Tom.

As Peter, James and John were called by Christ from fishing nets, may each one experience Christ's call from the nets of the game we all love and that He mysteriously designed.

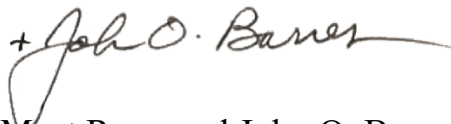
May Tom's beautiful soul and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace and may Perpetual Light shine on Tom and all the souls of our many basketball mentors."

My friends: I had written a tribute to our CYO coaches in February 2018 as I remembered my own CYO coach Joe Gallick. I thanked our coaches for "Modelling for our players and their families the connection between the Catholic Mass, vibrant Catholic parish life and community and the parish gym/field. Your fidelity and that of your family to the Sunday Mass is a great inspiration and critical foundation to the team play and chemistry you teach us. Never underestimate the witness you give when your players and their families, along with the entire parish, see you consistently and faithfully at the Sunday Mass. It sets a tone. It is 'salt and light to parish life, unity and mission. It is what I expect as your bishop and the point guard of the mission of the Catholic Church on Long Island.'"³

Inspired by Tom Konchalski's radical fidelity to the Catholic Mass, may we continue to be faithful to the Sunday Mass and be bold in inviting others to join us.

The future of CYO on Long Island is a future of Eucharistic Evangelization and integrated formation in the Catholic faith. I am so grateful that we are growing together in our commitment and I look forward to sharing with you some creative plans in the future.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John O. Barres" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre

³ [Holiness and Mission Feb. 2018 CYO.pdf \(drvc.org\)](#)