

# Young

## Batplayer says faith aids him on, off field

ROCHESTER — When P.J. Forbes, third baseman for the Rochester Red Wings, was growing up in Pittsburg, Kan., he asked his father if God cares about the outcome of sports events.

"My dad told me that God doesn't care if we win or lose, but his mother does," Forbes said. He added that that's why he always prays to Our Lady of Victory for help in his game.

Forbes, 31, talked about baseball and his Catholic faith in the Red Wings clubhouse at Frontier Field, where the Baltimore Orioles' Triple A club plays its home games. Forbes played third base during Diocesan Catholic Family Day on Aug. 22, and hit a single in the Red Wings' 4-1 loss to the Syracuse Sky Chiefs. (See related photos on Page 8.)

Although he doesn't believe God cares who wins a game, nonetheless, Forbes said he always prays when the national anthem is played prior to a contest.

"It's just my time to lock in," he said.

A 10-year veteran of the minor leagues, Forbes has played with the Red Wings since 1997, the year he made a game-clinching catch in the ninth inning of the fifth game of the Governor's Cup championship series against the Columbus Clippers.

"To me, it was just another play," he recalled.

He added that he spent 31 days with the Orioles in 1998, and got his first major league hit — an RBI single — during a game against the Kansas City Royals in the Royals' home stadium. Family members and friends

Story by Rob Cullivan  
Photos by Mike Mergen

numbering 100, including his mom and dad, witnessed the moment, he said.

During his time with the Orioles, he also got to see up close how the team's famed third baseman, Cal Ripken Jr., acted with fans. Ripken, who holds the major league record for most consecutive games played — 2,632 — was always gracious with fans, Forbes said, adding that he tries to be the same.

"I love signing autographs," Forbes said. "Is there anything better than signing a ball for a little kid and seeing his face light up?"

Grateful for the opportunity to make a living playing baseball, Forbes said he is also grateful for his faith. He attends weekend Masses at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Brighton, when he's in town, and at any Catholic church he can find when he's on the road.

Forbes hastened to point out that he's "no saint." He likes to have a drink now and then, and occasionally swears. However, he noted that, especially as he gets older, he's come to believe more deeply in his faith and is trying to attend daily Mass more often.

When asked what he likes about the church, he responded that Catholicism professes a great respect for human life, a respect he shares. For example, like the church, he opposes physician-assisted suicide, and fears that if it

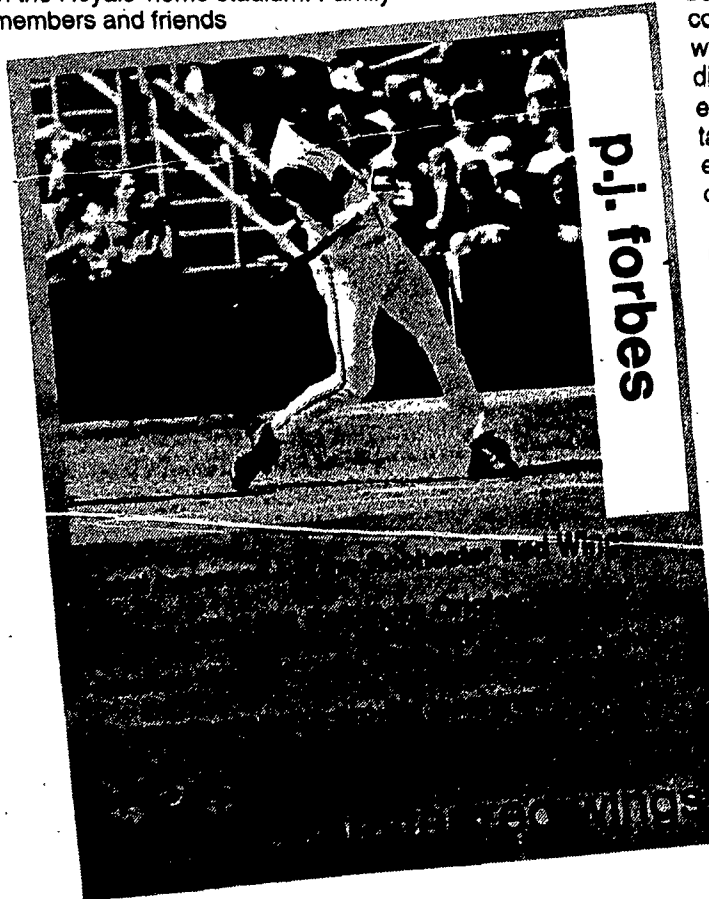
becomes commonplace, those with mental disabilities will eventually be targeted for elimination. He also opposes abortion.

"It boggles my mind that people don't feel a baby conceived is not a human life," he said.

He added that he doesn't believe abortion is a good choice for the mother, either.

"I've known women who've had abortions, and I've never seen more regret on anything more than that issue," he said.

Forbes is a middle child



### Events

Unless otherwise indicated, for information on the following events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375.

○ Tuesday, Aug. 31: Movie night at St. Cecilia School, Irondequoit, at 7 p.m. "Romero" is the story of a Salvadoran archbishop slain for speaking out for the poor. Discussion to follow. Popcorn and drinks provided.

○ Saturday, Sept. 11: Hike on the

Genesee Valley Greenway. Meet at Grace's Shur-Fine on Route 259, Scottsville, at 9 a.m. Lunch to follow two-hour trek.

○ Thursday, Sept. 23: Dinner at the Elmwood Inn Restaurant, 1256 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester, 7 p.m. Call by Sept. 22 to make reservations.

○ Saturday, Sept. 25: Picnic at Taughannock Falls, Trumansburg.

○ Wednesday, Oct. 6: Discussion on "Our Love/Hate Relationship With The Church."

with two older sisters and two younger sisters. One of his siblings was unable to have children after she successfully battled uterine cancer, he said, so she chose to adopt two children, another reason he opposes abortion.

"If people had chosen the 'easy' way out, I wouldn't have a beautiful niece and nephew," he said.

Forbes said he tries his best to practice his faith by keeping good company on the road, and avoiding the pitfalls that some professional athletes don't.

"Am I tempted by women? No," he said, though he added, "First of all, I'm ugly."

He also pointed out that he's getting married to a hometown woman in December, and talks to his fiancée in Kansas by phone whenever he can. Like his parents, he said, he wants to

experience a strong, Catholic family life.

"I love that family unity that we've formed, and I believe that this came out of our faith," he said.

He added that he's occasionally participated in prayer services with his non-Catholic Christian teammates, but said that many of them subscribe to a different biblical interpretation than he does.

"I feel very comfortable with the teachings of the Catholic faith and the way the Bible has been translated to me, and I leave it at that," he said.

As for his future in baseball, Forbes plans to keep playing as long as he can.

"I'm going to keep playing till they take my uniform away, and when they do, I'm going to take it back and manage," he said.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1999

Open 8:00 am. • Program begins 9:00 a.m. • Mass 5:00 pm



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Registrations are limited and will be accepted on a first-come first-serve basis!

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