

How Kobe Bryant's Encounter With a Catholic Priest Changed His Life

NBA legend Kobe Bryant died Sunday in a helicopter crash. Bryant was one of nine people who perished in the accident in Calabasas, California. His 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, was one of the victims. This 41-year-old future Hall of Famer will always be remembered in our hearts and honored for the legacy he fought to leave behind.

As many will recall, Bryant had a crisis in 2003 where he was accused of sexual violence toward another woman. However, what few know is that His faith in God, and one divinely inspired conversation with a Catholic priest, were the anchors that got him through it.

During the events of 2003, Bryant's wife filed for divorce and he hit a low. He turned to God and faith to help him get through. Bryant talked with a priest and chose to change his life around. Bryant and his wife Vanessa got back together and started the Kobe and Vanessa Bryant Family Foundation (KVBFF), "which encourages young kids to develop their physical and social skills through sports and charity work."

Bryant told *GQ* Magazine, "The one thing that really helped me during that process—I'm Catholic, I grew up Catholic, my kids are Catholic—was talking to a priest. It was actually kind of funny: He looks at me and says, 'Did you do it?' And I say, 'Of course not.' Then he asks, 'Do you have a good lawyer?' And I'm like, 'Uh, yeah, he's phenomenal.' So then he just said, 'Let it go. Move on. God's not going to give you anything you can't handle, and it's in His hands now. This is something you can't control. So let it go.' And that was the turning point."

That was a pivotal conversation that one could say formed and drove his post-NBA legacy the most. Not only is Bryant being remembered as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, but more importantly, he's being remembered as a devoted father, husband and guiding advocate of the game he loved so much.

"At the end of my career, I don't want to look back and just say, 'Well, I had a successful career because I won so many championships and scored so many points.' There's something else that you have to do with that," Bryant said.

Fellow NBA icon Michael Jordan said of Bryant, "He was a fierce competitor, one of the greats of the game and a creative force."

Our condolences to the family through this heartbreaking time. A national treasure, Bryant will always be remembered in our hearts and his family in our prayers. {eo}

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