

NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

YEAR 1, 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

This is a team game or can be played individually if there are only a few players. For each team, you will need a clear bag (ziploc would work) with objects for the team to build a contraption. The key to this game is the usability of the objects you place in the bags, the more interesting and versatile they are, the more creative the teams become. However, some of the bags should be “not like the others”. Depending on the number of players, make the contents of one or several bags unequally disadvantaged but *not* impossible to use. You can use objects such as: a length of string, a length of tape wound around a Popsicle stick, paper clips, balloon, pinwheel, safety pins, toothpicks, paper pieces, straws (or pieces of straws), rubber bands, cotton balls or hair pins.

Ask participants to form three to five groups or, for larger crowds, groups of three to five people. Tell participants that each team must build a contraption in ten minutes. The contraption will “go” from one end of a specific room or distance to another without being touched by the participants. They may blow on them, fan them or they may be propelled by their own forces but iterate that no one can lay a hand on the contraption after it is set on the starting line. Tell them that each group will receive a bag of supplies to use in building their contraptions. Give each group one of the bags. Hold up the bag (in an inconspicuous manner) so that all groups see the bag that is being given to each group. You need not comment on the contents of the bag.

If participants ask why the contents are different, just say that these are the supplies available for your group. That’s the way it is. Give participants a five-minute warning. When the allotted time is up, ask participants to put their unused supplies back into their bags. Ask everyone to set their contraptions at the starting line and begin the race.

After you have first, second and third place winners, gather everyone back together with their contraptions and engage the group in a discussion about this activity. Ask, “How did you feel when you noticed the materials that other teams had to work with?”, “Would these contraptions necessarily be a fair assessment of what all of you can do?”, “Is it important to consider individual circumstances and opportunities before judging a person’s capabilities or motivation? Why or why not?” Wrap up the discussion by explaining that human beings have a weakness in needing to assess people’s appearances and assets to make a judgement. But *Deuteronomy 1:17* says, “In rendering judgement, do not consider who a person is; give ear to the lowly and to the great alike, fearing no man, for judgement is God’s.” We are not called to judge people’s character when giving. God has the only claim to that job. We are only called to judge right from wrong and avoid doing wrong. Christ suffers with those who suffer and we neglect Christ’s sufferings when we are indifferent to other people’s suffering. Yes, we may not have good solutions for the poor in their desperate situations, and they may seem very far from us and our abilities. However, if we listen to Christ’s true needs in the people who are physically, emotionally or spiritually poor and act on love, we can count on God’s graces to overcome adversity and, by sharing what we have, we will never find ourselves wanting or being indifferent to those in need.