

THE ONLY ONE IN THE ROOM

YEAR 1, 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Ask, "Who here has ever been challenged to do something good, something good that you didn't want to do, by a parent, an instructor, coach or a boss?" Follow up with how did you know it was good? What was your personal experience?" Follow up again with, "Why didn't you want to do it? What did the pressure to get it done feel like?" After everyone, who wants to, has shared, wrap up the thought by briefly addressing the our negative reactions to such pressure: Blowing off Steam (insults, gossip, complaining); Harboring Anger (grudges, ugly thoughts and attitudes, rejection); Payback Method (opposition, sabotage, fake flattery).

Then explain that everyone treats God in this way because we're all sinners. Sin means that we will to reject God in a prideful presumption of self-sufficiency. We act like we know and are the best. Why do we act this way with God if we know He is good? The prince of lies, Satan, does a good job of convincing us that God is pressuring us. Recall the ways that the pressure felt. This makes us angry because someone is trying to control our actions. We don't like that. We're too proud, even if we know it is good for us, we won't do something if someone is "making us" do it.

Ask the group, "Does anyone recall what gift God gave us that promises that He will never put pressure on us?"

Briefly explain "Free Will."

Then quiet your tone and the level of talk in the room. Explain that Christ knows we are hurting. He knows that we are stuck under our own pride and that it is crushing us. He knows that those over us: parents, instructors, coaches, employers have misused their position of authority and taken advantage of our trust and our vulnerability. And Christ knows that we have done the same to others: those who needed us we walked past, those who are weaker than we took advantage. Christ knows. And He exclaimed in Luke 15:7 "There will be more joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

When we hear this verse we have to always remember that those ninety-nine have never existed. Every human being is in need of repentance. He does not ask us to surrender to His ways (the absolute good) out of force. He chases after each and everyone of us, leaving the righteous behind, looking at us He takes our insults, gossip, complaining, grudges, ugly thoughts and attitudes, rejection, opposition, sabotage and fake flattery. And He waits for us. Hanging from that cross (point to a crucifix), He waits for us to come out of ourselves and let His come down. From the cross He calls us to a mutual surrender of total self-giving. He shows us how good He is. He wants us to acknowledge our sin and so receive His mercy.

Those 99 do not exist. It is only that "one" who can truly represent each of us sinners. Christ knows we want to be the only one. He has put that desire in our hearts. Healing is not generic. We each need healing tonight. We need to hear it directly from Him. We need to encounter Him personally in Confession. But first we need not to deceive ourselves. We need to acknowledge our sins, so we can willingly ask Him to take them away. (1 Jn 1:8-9)

Invite the group to look at Jesus as He looks at them. (If you can, this would be an opportune time to enter into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or to dim the lights and focus attention on an image of Jesus Christ.)

Wrap things up by explaining that when we sorrowfully and realistically admit our sins, each one of us can experience the mercy and the joy of being that "only one" for Jesus. (James 4:7-8,10)

((**Note to facilitator:** *The Blessed Mother and all the saints of heaven were redeemed through Jesus Christ. The Virgin Mary was redeemed before she was born, while others were redeemed completely after Christ's death. This same mystery took place, during the last supper, when Jesus Christ offered the apostles His body -in union with His sacrifice on Calvary- before it chronologically happened. And now He continues to do this in every sacrifice of the Mass. God can use Christ's sacrifice as He is able: omnipresent throughout all of history.*))

-The Lost Sheep (Lk 15:3-7)