

One evening during the winter of 2003, I received a phone call. It was from Monsignor James T. O'Connor of St. Joseph's Parish in Millbrook. I had been talking to him about possibly entering the seminary. At that point, I hadn't talked to him in two or three months. He was just seeing how I was doing. Towards the end of the conversation, he told me I sounded "a little down." He suggested I come up to Millbrook and have lunch with him that coming weekend. He was right. I was "a little down." That weekend I went to see him. We had a long conversation. It eventually led me to entering the seminary in the Fall of 2003. One good conversation can be a game changer.

We all need a friend or friends. We all need at least one person we can seek advice from or confide in. One of the scary aspects of being a newly ordained priest is you realize that the buck now stops with you. What do people do in a jam or when they have a problem? If they are Catholic, they might see a priest or talk to a therapist. As a newly ordained priest, you are now that person. That said, in some ways your problems are just beginning. There are many challenges that come with being a priest. If you aren't open with someone about those challenges, danger is lurking.

Once again, the Gospel focus today is on the verbal exchange between Jesus and Judas at the Last Supper. Yesterday's version was from *The Gospel of John* and today's version is from *The Gospel of Matthew*. What's apparent from both accounts is that none of the apostles suspected that Judas was about to betray the Lord. Jesus and the 12 Apostles had been together for three years and nobody seems to have suspected Judas was annoyed with Jesus. Even after Jesus dipped bread into a dish and handed it to Judas, indicating he was the one who was going to betray Him, nobody suspected it was him. After Judas then got up from the table and left the house, it seems not to have registered with the apostles. Judas must have kept all his doubts, frustrations and anger to himself.

An unfortunate reality of life is that with some people there's almost no point reasoning with them. Their minds are made up about you or your viewpoint. I suspect Judas could have been that kind of person. He serves as an example of how dangerous that mindset can be. Acknowledging that, perhaps if Judas had talked about what was going on within him, things would have been different. It's too hard to imagine a heart to heart talk with Our Lord not helping. Maybe, one of his brother apostles would have talked him out of betraying Jesus. We will never know. I think, however, if he shared what he was feeling, things might have gone down differently. Judas must have been a good guy. He wouldn't have been chosen to be an apostle if he was not.

Who do you talk with regarding serious matters? Superficial relationships are fine. They serve a purpose. However, you are more than meets the eye. Most people, if not everyone, carries around emotional scars, unresolved anger, frustrations and various concerns. The easiest way to develop good relationships is be first a good person yourself. Be a good friend and you'll find a good friend. Pray for a good friend too. Finally, remember unlike anyone else, the Lord will lend you His ear 24/7.

