

# One and Only

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## Exceptional

We are all tempted to fall into the trap of believing that we are the exception. The rules apply to “other people”, but the don’t apply to me. Other people should behave a certain way, but in my case, I have a “pass”. I am the exception. I am exceptional. The problem with this is that it can lead us, not only into a pattern of excuses and exemption, but we can also begin to see ourselves as being the exception when it comes to God’s mercy. If I see myself as one to whom the rules don’t apply...I will see myself as one to whom the grace cannot reach

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## Discussion Questions

1. Name one time in the last week when you may have given yourself a “pass” in an area you would like other people to obey. Did you think twice about it? Why or why not?
2. When it comes to eliminating an obstacle from your life, what has been the thought process behind any lack of taking action? We are all aware of certain things existing in our lives that keep us from God? What lead to your unwillingness to remove it?
3. What is your typical reaction to moments when you feel shame? Are you the kind of person who wants to hide? Or do you respond by attacking the person before whom you feel ashamed? Why?
4. What do you think about the idea that exceptionalism cuts both ways? It can put us in a place where the rules don’t apply to us, but also in a place where we imagine that the grace can’t reach us? Do you think that that is true?
5. The antidote to exceptionalism is to realize that you are not alone. Do you often feel alone? Sometimes? Never? Would you be willing to reflect and share about a time when shame isolated you, but another person welcomed you back?
6. Bonus-Deep-Sharing: Alessandro was only able to move forward because he realized that he was not the exception to grace. Is there anything in your life that you believe you can be freed from? If you are willing, please share.

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## God in Real Life

- I. You are not the only person who has ever struggled. In fact, “there is no temptation that has come against you except that which is common to all men”. Shame can cause us to hide or react in anger. What if you brought your shame to Jesus? You are invited to bring your sins to Confession this week. The antidote for shame is acceptance, and the remedy for sin is Jesus. Bring you sin and shame to Confession and receive mercy.

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## Be Transformed

Scripture warns against the danger of being “the exception”:

- A. King Saul refused to wait for the priest, Samuel, to offer the sacrifice. He went ahead and did “what he saw fit” even though he knew that Samuel was the individual that God has chosen and set aside for this task (1 Samuel 13:8-15)
- B. Jesus chose a murderer to be his Apostle to the Gentiles. Saint Paul had been an accomplice to the execution of Saint Stephen. He also tormented and arrested other Christians. Yet, he was called to move forward in grace, not live in his sin (see Acts 7 and 9).
- C. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 Jn 1:9–10).
- D. “Yet, the ultimate and all-important source of our transformation in Christ lies not in what *we* do or what *we can* do by our free will, but in what God accords to us in the Sacraments: above all, our participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of Holy Communion. The Lord Himself alone, who has redeemed and regenerated us by His most holy Blood, can receive us and transform us in His nature. Indeed, He cries to us: “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). What *we* can contribute is that we *do* thirst—and drink.” (Von Hildebrand, D. (2001). Transformation in Christ: On the Christian Attitude (p. 249).

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## To the Heart

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Co 10:13).