

I'd like to tell you six stories about wearing a mask; that is, about hiding part of our personality so that other people won't find out who we really are. These are stories about the temptation to wear a mask to avoid rejection.

Story #1. Greg is one of five doctors in the office. The other four, one of whom is a Catholic like Greg, all perform abortions. He lives in fear of the day he'll be on duty when the other doctors won't be available for a scheduled abortion. Greg doesn't discuss his position with the others; he's afraid they'll reject him from the group. Greg wears a mask.

Story #2. Jane is a successful single businesswoman. She read in the paper last week that Good Samaritan House may have to close because the community will not support AIDS patients. Jane is sympathetic to the cause, but she fears that if she makes the donation she wants to give, her narrow-minded business associates will unjustly wonder about her lifestyle and reject her. She makes the donation anonymously. Jane lifts her mask a little.

Story #3. At the Second Vatican Council the Church had to decide about making changes in the Mass. Some bishops were afraid that many of the faithful would reject the Church along with the changes. The bishops felt it was in the better interests of the Church to make the changes, in spite of the danger of rejection. The Church refused to wear a mask.

Story #4. The American bishops grew increasingly concerned about the arms buildup and the economy of our country. They knew if they made a statement on these issues that people would criticize the bishops for mixing politics with religion, people would claim that they knew nothing about economy, people would say they should put their own house in order first. Nevertheless, the bishops felt impelled to share their faith with the community. They could have worn a mask, but they released two pastoral letters instead.

Story #5. 2,000 years ago, God had a difficult decision to make--how best to reveal himself to his people. It took long enough for them to understand there was only one God. Now he wanted them to know that the one God was a Trinity. It would be risky to make the revelation, but God sent his Son into the world. And many people believed in him, but many rejected him, arrested him, and crucified him. They rejected the Holy Trinity. God removed his mask and suffered so that we might have life.

Story #6. Elvira has been married 12 years to John. Two of those years have been happy. For the most part, they don't communicate well. Elvira has strong opinions about the way John spends money, the way he talks about her behind her back, and the way their sexual life has deteriorated. But she never has discussed these things with him. She's afraid he'll reject her if she reveals how she really feels. Elvira wonders what to do about her mask.