First Confession Essay, Research Paper

Mrs. Ryan and the Priest

In Frank O?Connor?s story ?First Confession?, Mrs. Ryan and the priest are different. Mrs. Ryan and the priest approach Jackie differently and have different affects on him.

Mrs. Ryan makes Jackie feel like a sinner in her approach to him. She teaches him how to examine his heart by asking himself a few questions, ?Did we take the name of the Lord, our God in Vain? Did we honor our father and mother? Did we love our neighbors as ourselves? Did we covet our neighbors goods??(614). This made Jackie feel like he is a sinner because he feels that he was not honoring his grandmother and feels that he coveted Nora?s penny she got every week from their grandmother.

Mrs. Ryan affects Jackie by making him feel that confession is scary. After telling her story about the man who made a bad confession, Jackie becomes scared of going to confession. Mrs. Ryan is trying to scare Jackie so that he won?t make a bad confession but instead she causes him to become scared of going to confession. Jackie becomes so scared that he starts to think, ??I would make a bad confession and then die in the night and be continually coming back and burning people?s furniture? (616).

The priest uses an approach of understanding. He understands Jackie?s thought of being a sinner, for instance, he tells Jackie that there are a lot of people he would like to go after with a bread knife as well. This had to make Jackie feel better about not being a sinner because the priest had thought the same thing as he had. For Jackie says that he tried to kill his grandmother and Nora and the priest says, ??there?s a lot of people I?d like to do the same to??(618).

The priest affects Jackie by comforting him. When the priest catches Nora clipping Jackie across the ear and yelled at her for doing this, Jackie feels comforted because no one had ever defended him against her before. The priest also comforts him by telling Jackie, ??wait now until I?m finished with the old ones.?(617). Jackie now feels special because the priest is going to take time with him. The priest comforts Jackie to where he is not scared of confession anymore. Jackie says, ?The relief of it was really enormous.?(617).

Between Mrs. Ryan and the priest, the method the priest uses works better than Mrs. Ryan?s does. Teaching people religion by scaring them does not work because someone is not going to want to learn more about it if he or she is going to become scared. The way the priest approaches and comforts Jackie is a much better method. If a person is comforted and approached in a since of understanding, it would be more likely that he or she would want to listen to the person trying to teach him or her.