

If the last two Sundays have been about how we approach Jesus: with the fear of the disciples, or the faith of Jairus --- then this week's Gospel is about how we approach others: with open minds and hearts – or with minds and hearts that are closed . . .

Consider the experience of Jesus: those in the synagogue in Nazareth knew him growing up. They knew his family. They had him all figured out. So where did he get off trying to teach them? --- Who did he think he was? They had Jesus all wrapped up in a nice little box.

Think of your own experience. Haven't we all conformed to what others have decided who we are. I mean sometimes don't we even talk differently with different groups – depending on what box they expect us to be in?

I was at the barber shop this week – and while waiting for the chair to open up – sat listening to a couple of guys talking --- who were using language I'm fairly certain they wouldn't be using at home with the wife and kids. . . But that kind of language is just what is expected among guys –when it is just the guys. That's the familiar box.

We may do some things totally out of character with one group but totally in character with another. That's pretty much what peer pressure is all about – which we think only exists among teenagers – but most of us live with it – or at least live with the expectations of it --- throughout our adult lives.

The fact is – all of us are always much more than people think we are. And other people are always much more than we think they are. . .

You may never know or be able to tell, that as an off the chart introvert – what I am doing now – totally drains me. And I may never know or be able to tell -- that you struggle with depression or addictions.

You may never know, as my friends do, that I am super competitive when it comes to playing board games and cards. And I may never know that every day you take care of an elderly parent and clean their house and get their groceries.

You may never know my secret fantasies and desires / weaknesses and strengths – nor I yours.

The point is that we are indeed more than people think and sometimes – it breaks out. Sometimes a strikingly wicked or heroic deed pops out to challenge others' assessments and they exclaim about us, “ We never knew you had it in you.” Likewise, in a similar situation, we say of them, “We never knew they had it in them.”

Anyway, the truth is that people are always more than we think – and therefore we must always grant them transcendence, that extra dimension of being. We must never lock them in the box, nor allow them lock us in.

Of Jesus they said, “Where did he get all this?” We thought we knew him. We had him in his proper box. But, like all of us, Jesus was more than they those at Nazareth thought. And so it is that we must liberate this deep truth in ourselves and in others.

What I am saying is that there is in each of us an authentic call to holiness – to quiet heroism. We have it in us. Every one of us. *And one of these days* we have to walk away from our routine sins and doubts, the worship of consumerism and celebrity, the indifferent life, and our gray – lackluster-spiritual existence. We have to answer that call to embrace in a very public way the truth that there is so much more to all of us --- that we are called to live beyond the box, to do the unexpected, the heroic

deed, take the unpopular stance, express the transcendence within us --- and allow others to do the same.

The Gospel message reminds us that we are always more than people think. We are, in fact, exactly as God thinks. We must take the step to let God's assessment of us show brightly. And if it causes our friends to wonder – so be it!

Such liberating thoughts on this Independence Day (weekend).