

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year B

Do people easily “box” you in a certain category? That you are this person and not this person?

How many types of labels do we have now? Blood type, personality type, IQ, zodiac sign, career, status, etc., among many other labels and categories.

For many people, with these labels, it is hard to change.

It happens to all of us, in one way or another.

And it is usually heightened when we go through some kind of a conversion.

Often those closest to us, such as our family members, from whom we expect love and support, are the very ones who misunderstand us.

Because they think they know us, or at least they presume to know us really well.

This is what Jesus encountered on one of His homecoming visits.

You would think that His town-mates would welcome him with open arms and hearts as He comes back to His own.

Yet people are quick to put Him in a box as: *“Is he not the son of Mary? Is he not the carpenter?”*

In other words: *“Who does he think he is?”*

An author George Bernard Shaw wrote *“We must face the fact that all society is based upon intolerance.”*

The smaller the society, the more controlling this narrow spirit.

Beneath the charm of the rural town or village, there often lurks a lethal intolerance.

People who have known you all through your life, see you as the child you were, even when you are a middle-aged man or woman.

They see where you came from and they remember all your youthful mistakes.

If they are villagers, they also want to make sure you are not getting above yourself.

Nazareth was such a place.

How often we are amazed when someone from our neighbourhood achieves significant prominence!

We almost choke, “*But I knew him as a young kid in shorts.*” “*I had no idea she would end up a famous singer.*”

And if we’re on a committee to select a speaker for some important occasion, we are much more inclined to seek out someone from at least a hundred miles away.

The inhabitants of Nazareth, especially His relatives, felt the same way about Jesus.

Where did He get all this knowledge? [L I T T L E
S E P A R A T E D]

So they did not put any faith in Him!

But Jesus is more than meets the eye.

The people are obviously amazed.

How can a carpenter speak such words of wisdom? How is He able to perform such marvelous deeds?

How much was lost by the skeptical Nazoreans who were so lacking in faith!

But like so many of us, they had already put Jesus in a box, dismissing Him with the too-easy judgment that they knew Him, and knew all they needed to know about Him.

And so Jesus was so frustrated and disappointed in them.

The lesson is that: every person is a mystery and a seat of remarkable possibilities.

To label and put a person in a box, is to deprive ourselves of the opportunity to discover and experience who that person really is.

What unimaginable opportunity the Nazoreans had lost by labeling and putting Jesus in a box!

The terrible fact is that putting the person in a box works!

It tied Jesus’ hands: “*he could work no miracles there,*” wrote the Gospel of Mark.

It is a frightful thought that we have the ability to prevent miracles, to tie the Lord’s hands...because of our doubts, our insecurities, our biases, our intolerance, our wrong judgment, our lack of faith.

So, we can examine ourselves, we can ask ourselves: How many miracles have I prevented in my life? Or this week?

Why are my wife and children so quiet? Are they sinking into despair?

Or have I a way of making my husband feel so bad that everything he might do or say is condemned in advance?

God prevent that I should be a miracle-stopper!

With this Gospel in the background, let us pray today that may the Lord help us to respect each person as a mystery and to give each one the space to explore his or her remarkable potentialities. May the Lord prevent us from being a miracle-stopper today. Amen.