

Fr. O'Connor's Homily  
14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time-B  
7 July 2024

Ezekiel 2: 2-5  
2 Corinthians 12: 7-10  
Mark 6: 1-6

In today's Gospel, Jesus comes home to Nazareth. And this scene tells us that we are in for some social fireworks. The people of Nazareth thought they had Him all figured out. They knew His family. They watched Him grow up. How did He have the nerve to preach to them in their synagogue?

They had put Jesus in a box. And a very small one, at that. Putting other people in a box is a human tendency which can become a lifelong habit.

The truth is that we are each more than what other people see. And other people are more than what we see. Sometimes this "more" breaks through when people say: "I didn't know you had that in you."

Jesus' hometown people thought they knew everything there was to know about Him. And my, were they mistaken!

Popular fiction is full of box-breaking stories.

There is Clark Kent who was placed in the box of being a mild-mannered reporter. But he soared over the heads of others as Superman.

There was the floor-scrubbing Cinderella who rose to become an elegant princess.

There was the ugly duckling that became a beautiful swan.

There was the kid from Kansas named Dorothy who got to visit the Land of Oz with her dog, Toto.

We love stories like these because they give us the courage to dream big dreams and break out of the boxes that others have built for us.

We are each more than what others see. And this is the call of the Gospel: to become the person that God created us to be, that God envisions us to be. And what is that? To become the best versions of ourselves. To be a saint.

There was the spoiled rich kid, named Francesco Bernardone [1181/2-1226], who ran around with his rat pack. And then one day he heard the Lord say to him: "Serve the Master, and not the man." Francesco

became less and less interested in good-timing with his friends. He went home and renounced all the family money and privileges. And he walked away to become “the happy poor man” that we know today as Saint Francis of Assisi. And his friends thought they had him all figured out. My, were they mistaken!

There was a poor and rather uneducated French girl, named Bernadette Soubirous [1844-1879], who claimed that she saw the Blessed Mother Mary at Lourdes. The people in authority did not believe her at first. They thought she would cave in and take back her story. But they didn’t know what she had within her! Now she is known as Saint Bernadette.

And there was Dorothy Day, a lady that you may have seen in photographs. She is generally wearing a woolen stocking cap over her grey hair. A worn, tweed coat covers her plain housedress. She was a rebel, had an affair, and even had an abortion. She was put into the box called “a loser.” And then she encountered Jesus Christ and became a Catholic.

The Lord took her rebel nature and baptized it into working for Him. She had a great love for the poor. She was shot at, literally. She was investigated by the FBI. And she was imprisoned for her part in a rally supporting the rights of migrant workers. She co-founded the **Catholic Worker** newspaper and opened many houses of hospitality for the poor. And her cause is under consideration today for her canonization as a saint. Who would have ever thought this of Dorothy Day [1897-1980] from Brooklyn, New York?

And here is another example. Bishop Fulton Sheen, the great preacher, was told by his college debate coach, “You’re absolutely the worst speaker I have ever heard.” And Bishop Sheen is on the road to canonization too.

The people of Jesus’ own hometown thought they had Him all figured out. But there was far more to Him than any of them could see. And, as His followers, there is more to us than others may see as well.

So what am I saying to you today?

We are called – every single one of us – to be saints: to live outside the box that others may have put us in. To turn from being “a sidelines Christian” to falling in love with Jesus Christ and His Church. To be a

missionary disciple of Jesus, and a grateful, generous steward of His abundant blessings.

And how can we do this? “My grace is sufficient for you,” the Lord told Saint Paul in today’s second reading. With God’s grace, we can do this.

And do what? To become the person that God created us to be, that God envisions us to be. To become the best version of ourselves. To be a saint.

The Gospel message reminds us that we are each more than other people see. We are, in fact, graced to become exactly as God envisions us to be. We must not be afraid to allow God’s dream for us to shine in our lives.

And if this causes people around us to wonder, so much the better – for them and for us!