

As many of you know, Bill and I have four adult daughters...
and...if you would be willing to allow me a bit of parental indulgence..
I am truly quite proud of them all...
One is a social worker, one a surgical physician's assistant,
one is a lawyer and one is an interior architect...
When I hear them speak in their chosen fields...I am truly shocked!
Wow! they sound like real adults!!
that's my—our-- little girl....
and then I meet their friends,
some of whom I have known since their girl scout days
and these young women are all grown up too! Go figure!
I like to say: "How did they get older and I didn't???"

Today, Jesus goes back to his hometown, "all grown up"...
He's identified as son of Mary, which is actually pretty unusual in those days.
Typically children, especially sons, are identified with their fathers,
so scholars believe Joseph must have died by this point.

In those days, parents never expected
that their children could or should do better than they did...
If you were poor....your children were destined to live in poverty.
If you were in the upper class...well, then too, your children were in that class of society...
everyone, back then, stayed in their place.
The concept of social mobility, pulling one up by one's own bootstraps,
the classic American rags to riches story,
well, that wasn't part of the people's psyche at that time...
You just didn't do those kind of things.....

So for Jesus to speak with wisdom,
to perform great deeds,

to cast out demons,
to cure the sick and to feed the hungry
well...how come he can do those things when he's *MARY'S* son and the son of a carpenter
to boot????

Shouldn't he be a carpenter as well?
How can he be so wise...????
and they became resentful...perhaps fearful...
and because they took offense,
because they closed their minds
to his power,
they could not receive all the grace he could offer....

oh...the evangelist says,
he could do no deed of power among the, except lay his hands on a few sick people and cure
them...
well, duh...that's no small potatoes as far as I'm concerned...
but that's a topic for another day...

Today, I'd like to reflect upon the expectations, the boxes, the limits
we often place on other people, especially the people we know the best....

Isn't it strange that those that we know well,
are usually the ones that we judge the harshest and limit the most?
Perhaps it is exactly because we know them so well
we know their inconsistencies and their faults and failings
that we struggle to see how they have grown through or beyond
how they used to be and we fail to see how or who they have grown
into being now...

We fill our heads with “yes, but...”

Yes, they are 35 years old, but he’s are still my little boy...

Yes, she’s earned a PhD in her field,

but I can’t help think of her when she cried on the playground in first grade...

Yes, he’s gone on to be the CEO of a major corporation,

**but I remember well, when he couldn’t organize his own backpack to make sure
he took his homework to school!**

Yes...yes...but.....

So often with the people we know the best,

**we keep them safely inside a box of our own expectations and our memories
of who they used to be and who we think they should be...**

and there’s the rub...there’s that ‘s’ word: should.

Our daughter, our son, our spouses, our selves...

SHOULD be x or y or z...

Have you done that to anyone you love?

Has it been done to you?

Some of our kids do follow our ‘shoulds’....

I remember one young man who really wanted to be an architect...

no, no, no his dad said: you’ll never make any money...

just do what I did: work for the company...it’s safe and secure....

and the young man followed his dad’s advice ...

and yes, he is safe and his job is secure,

but he so not happy...

**Others kids ignore them and they march to their own drummer...
Which is what Jesus did...**

**I wonder how he felt being unrecognized and unappreciated by those he grew up with...
If he had followed the 'shoulds' of his neighbors and family
history would have been radically changed....**

Each of us, all of us, must live our unique lives...

For that is how the Holy finds a way of being in the world...

Each of us have been born to make known a particular face of God in the world...

If we imprison ourselves into other's expectations...

well we just duplicate them...

**If we imprison others into our expectations...well...why do we think we are so grand, that
there ought to be a lot of 'us' around!**

**Elle Luna once said: "There are two paths is life: should and must. We arrive at this
crossroads over and over again. And every day we get to choose."**

Should is following what others think you should do.

Many people, perhaps most people have lived their lives as others believed they should.

Jesus and many others lived their lives the way they must...

**they could not deny the deep yearning that was seeking a way
into the world, through their lives....**

**and these are the people who have brought a little more beauty, a little more love, a lot
more joy into the world...**

Parker Palmer once wrote a beautiful, tiny book entitled:

"Let Your Life Speak"...what is it, he asked that you must do?

What is it, that if you don't do it,

you will betray yourself and the Holy Mystery that created you?

What is it that you must do for your life to be authentic and real...

**For sure, there will be consequences for following your path...
Jesus certainly experienced them,
In today's gospel his neighbors were offended and we all know that
eventually his neighbors, his religion and his government crucified him....**

**That's a pretty big price...gratefully, most of us won't be asked that much...
but, when you follow your deep inner calling...your 'must'...
you will pay a price...
but, in fact there in lies both your power and your happiness...**

The only question is: which path will you choose: your should or your must? amen.