

No one believes me when I tell them that I'm shy, especially when I say I'm painfully shy. And I don't know why.

Don't they get it that I'll find any excuse not to go to a party, and I turn all shades of red when I have to speak and I'm not prepared to do so, and I can't make small talk for the life of me, and I look like I'd rather be anywhere in the world than being with people I don't know.

And I'm not going to ask who here is shy because if you were, odds are you wouldn't raise your hand anyway.

In any case, I've shared with you before how all my life this shyness made some people think there was something wrong with me, and believe me, that suspicion makes you wonder if there really is something wrong with you. But I've come to realize- finally- that there is nothing wrong with being shy, and it's just as good as being someone who doesn't know when to zipper their lip.

But even when I was entering the Capuchins- which is almost 20 years ago, believe it or not- some of my superiors- the ones who were in charge of me and the other new friars- they had very real doubts about me even entering the order. *"How is he ever going to do this if he is afraid of his own shadow?" "He doesn't say anything!" "What we would do with someone like this? Could he ever do anything?"*

In other words, they wanted to reject me because of one characteristic of myself- one part of who I am. Like judging you simply on the basis of where you came from, or the people you are related to or what you have done- or not done- in the past.

*They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary,*

*and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

In other words, they rejected Jesus because of one part of who He was, and look what they missed out on.

Rejection is never easy to take, but it's hardest most of all when it comes from the people who are closest to you and you thought would always take you as you are. And it's often the people we're closest to that expect the most from us and don't give us any break at all if we don't live up to their expectations. And the ironic part is that even though they think they know us so well, they really don't know us- as we are now- at all.

That's what Jesus was facing in today's Gospel and you can sense his frustration and his hurt. He grew up in the midst of them, and they presumed to know everything about Him- that's an understatement if there ever was one. They refused to be open to who He was now and therefore closed themselves off to what God was doing right there in the middle of them.

Their unbelief didn't make Jesus' mission obsolete, and it didn't render God powerless, but it did make those people unable to receive the good things that were coming to them.

We can't allow what people say about us or think about us to make us not do whatever we want to do, or become what we want to become, or become the person God created me to be. Yes, we have to take the words and the opinions of our parents and our teachers very seriously- they love us and they care for us and they are responsible for us- but we can't allow what other people are saying to make us think that we are less than what we truly are.

We have to remember and we have to appreciate just how incredible each one of us is- the riches of who each one of us is, and how God is working through each of us for the good of

ourselves and our families and our community and of the world around us. We even sometimes surprise ourselves at what we can do.

And all this comes from a confidence born of our knowledge that we are children of God- think about that for a second- each uniquely gifted by God and uniquely gifted to do our particular role in God's providence and God's plan for the world- God's plan to make the world the way He wants it to be and the way it should be and the way it can be.

If we just give each other a chance- a chance to express ourselves and make mistakes and to sometimes do things that aren't the ordinary way of doing things and which may get some people upset.

As you may know, I did pretty well for myself as a Capuchin, especially for a shy person who they thought would never amount to much. A big part of that was Fr. Raphael, who was one of my directors and is one of the most important people in my life. He saw something good in me when everyone else was focusing on something they didn't like. And I hope you have someone like Fr. Raphael in your life- someone who will support you and encourage you and help you see your goodness when you are not able to.

Because you are good- better than you may know- and God knows that, and what else could you want?