

JUNE 7 2025, FATHER ROSHAN LOY D’SOUZA

All of us do it. We compare ourselves to others and by doing so we expose ourselves to one of two things : pride or low self esteem. neither is healthy. Following Jesus is a journey. Some days may be smooth, and other days commotion. However, remember it is between you and God, not anyone else. In today’s first reading, Paul arrives in Rome in chains yet enjoys relative freedom.

For two years, he is allowed to continue witnessing Jesus. After Jesus made Peter publicly profess his love, Peter must have felt very embarrassed and uncomfortable, especially when Jesus predicted his death. “When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” (John 21:18). Peter wondered if this prediction was a punishment for his three-fold denial.

Knowing that John was the only disciple standing at the Cross's foot with Mary, Peter was eager to know if John would be spared martyrdom for being the good guy. He asked Jesus: “What about this man?” Jesus’ response to Peter’s questions sets the tone for today’s reflection:

1. The Crosses We Must Carry Are Not Punishment For Sins: Regardless of our righteousness, being a Christian comes at a price. We live in a world that is not ours.

When bad things happen, do not rush to conclude that God is punishing you for your past sins. If God were to deal with us according to our sins, many martyrs who were gruesomely murdered would never have suffered such fate because the martyrs all lived righteous lives. Peter would suffer martyrdom not because of his denial (which Jesus forgave him) but because it was his fate.

2. Avoid Using Others to Judge Your Progress in Life: This point is difficult to practice because we are social beings and tend to follow the crowd. Also, we derive a sense of achievement from knowing that we are doing better than others, especially those within our close circle. Even among the disciples of Jesus, there were rivalries – arguments

about who was the greatest. The spirit of competition is wired into our being; we want to be the greatest among our peers, classmates, siblings, fellow employees, business associates, etc. While this could motivate us to take necessary steps that bring about positive growth, it also has negative side effects.

3. We Gain Nothing By Comparing: Jesus said to Peter, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!”. In other words, even if his fate appears different from yours, you are both on the same boat.

As Christians, we all have crosses to carry, but no one’s cross is lighter than another. As St. Paul would say, God will never give you a cross you cannot handle: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” When you start thinking God is unfair, your cross becomes impossible. It is easy to think life is easier for others, but this is only because we are not in their shoes.

4. Find Your Purpose; Follow Your Call: After Peter confessed his love three times, Jesus told him, “Follow me!” Jesus repeats the same statement: “Follow Me!” after answering Peter’s question about John’s fate. Life is too short to be lived in someone else’s shadow. You start living the day you discover your purpose: what you truly want, are ready to die for, and want to be remembered for. For instance, Paul knew his purpose was to preach and devoted all his life to this. Paul did not see preaching as work; he did not do it for a paycheck; he did it passionately. Even when preaching God’s word brought him untold hardships, Paul never gave up on his purpose.

Paul would spend a long time in prison; his freedom of movement had denied him, but with his pen (writings), Paul continues to preach even today.

5. The Bible Does Not Say Everything: St. John concludes His Gospel on this note: “There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” The Bible is God’s Word, but God’s Word is not limited to the written text. Jesus said there were many things He would have wanted to say, but He did not say them because we were not yet ready, and the Holy Spirit was coming to continue Jesus’ teaching. Tomorrow is Pentecost Day. Are you ready for the Holy Spirit? Keep your hearts and minds open for the spirit of God Fill you and transform you. Amen.