

JULY 12 2025 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

Whether it's fear about losing one's loved ones, job, or home, fear about political scenarios around the world today, or fear about something else, there is no doubt that there is a lot of it about these days. Fear is often about what we think will happen in the future. Even though we can never know for sure what will happen, human beings tend to project bad things because of an evolutionary point of view. Our brains are wired to anticipate danger. It's an inbuilt survival mechanism inherited from our prehistoric ancestors.

From the moment we are born, we learn to fear the world around us, especially to fear the stranger, sometimes to fear even those who are closest to us. Fear is the driving force behind vast segments of our economy, as well as, increasingly, our political priorities. Jesus recognizes that fear will also cause the failure of discipleship.

Jesus' disciples courageously leave the security of their homes and families to follow him. As they proclaim the advent of God's reign, they too will know and ultimately bow before the power of fear. So, as Jesus prepares his disciples for their mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he is starkly realistic about the threats they will face. At the same time, he builds the case for why they should not let this fear master them or hinder their witnesses.

Jesus' mission discourse grants disciples remarkable powers to heal, purge demons, cleanse lepers, even to raise the dead. But he also denies them money, pay, extra clothes, a staff for their protection, even sandals. They are to undertake their mission in complete vulnerability and dependence on God, even knowing that they go as sheep in the midst of wolves, face arrests and beatings, opposition even from family members, and hatred and persecution.

Why does Jesus highlight the horrors that await the disciples? Naming aloud the suffering to be endured and its causes is the first step in freeing them from the tenacious grip of fear. In the latter half of the discourse, where our focus lies, Jesus continues to describe worst-case scenarios, wound together with statements of reassurance and repeated calls to resist fear.

The most important element of reassurance lies in the integral relationship that is affirmed between the disciples and Jesus, and through him, to God, heavenly Father. "Do not fear" is the dominant, recurrent message in the Gospels. But first, Jesus offers a warning: whatever fate awaits teachers or masters also awaits their disciples and slaves. If Israel's elites call Jesus the prince of demons, the disciples should be ready for a similar response. "So, have no fear of them."

The claim that whatever is covered up will be uncovered and secrets made known arises from the disclosive power of the Gospel, in which the disciples participate through the means of their mission. Their simplicity, vulnerability, and dependence on God demonstrate the reality of God's presence and character in the face of the world's claims to possess real power. Even though doing so will bring suffering, the Gospel must now be proclaimed "in the light" and "from the housetops," for the Gospel proclaimed and lived is the most powerful tool at the disciples' disposal against the powers of this world.

The threat of death may be the most powerful form of fear. Jesus' next expression of reassurance addresses this fear directly, yet with irony. The right to kill is one of the chief props in the facade of human political power. Jesus admits that humans exercise this power, but notes that they have power only to kill the body, not the whole person. God alone can destroy both soul and body. God alone, and can only, save us.

So, today, as we honour our heavenly Father, we pray that we may be fearless in living our Christian values, live the commandments and

values of the kingdom, to experience and live the blessings here on earth.

Amen.