

JULY 19 2025 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

How do you handle conflict? Fight? Or flight? Some of us are fighters. We stand our ground. We're warriors for justice, for ourselves and for others. We'll never stand by and let evil take the reins.

Some of us avoid conflict. We keep the peace at all costs. We take the way of the cross: it's godlier to suffer wrong than to demand rights. It might seem Funny that both groups conscript Jesus. Justice warriors look up to a Jesus, as a leader who stood up for the poor, the outcasts, the unacceptable "sinners." He trained his followers to handle confrontation, bringing not peace but a sword. He announced woes on the Galilean towns that rebuffed his kingship. He confronted the Pharisees so vehemently and persistently that they wanted to destroy him.

On the other hand, Jesus quits the confrontation and withdraws. And this isn't the first time. When John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus withdrew into Galilee. This non-confrontational Jesus was not what John expected the Messiah to be. Jesus didn't rescue John. John was beheaded, and Jesus withdrew again.

So, what's all this withdrawing? Is this another side to Jesus? Is this the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild"?

Matthew seems to think so. He quotes Isaiah's message about God's tender sensitivity for fragile people, portraying Jesus as the embodiment of God's heart. What a contrast to the rulers of this world!

Jesus doesn't quarrel or raise his voice to get his demands met. You never hear him growling his orders across the street. He's so conscious of his people's struggles.

Divine authority is a banquet of justice served with gentleness. Justice confronts those who have power: that power must be given over to God for the kingdom of God to be established. But Jesus will bring justice

without the collateral damage, without force, without war, without harming the people in the trenches. That's why it takes so long. Jesus fights for justice, but he won't let the fight become violent. That's why he stopped fighting and withdrew at this point. The fight had taken an unproductive turn. It ceased being about the issue (Jesus' kingship) and became personal. It's time to withdraw when the fight turns to destroying people.

If you tend to avoid conflict, look at Jesus and learn how to fight for justice. It matters.

If you tend to fight, look at Jesus and learn when to withdraw. Collateral damage matters.

Jesus' primary concern is for those who are afflicted and vulnerable, the 'crushed reeds' and the 'smouldering wicks' of this world. Matthew sees Jesus as the embodiment of this servant figure. Jesus had spoken of himself as 'gentle and humble of heart' and his primary ministry is to those in greatest need, both physically and spiritually.

Jesus is the human face of God's zeal for us, a zeal that works to bring a greater fullness of life to all. It is a zeal that embraces us all and which we are all called to give expression to, in our dealings with others. Jesus is leading us to justice, without war. We follow him in the fight that destroys injustice without destroying anyone. That's the future our king is leading us to, guided by his Holy Spirit. Amen.