

SEPTEMBER 14 2025 FATHER VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

A few years ago, I was called to visit a parishioner, a woman of deep faith, who was diagnosed with an incurable cancer at age 57 and was given six months to live. Honestly, when I went into her bedroom in her home, I was expecting her to be bitter and be angry to some extent with God. But to my great surprise, she was all smiles and welcoming and looked like someone who was very much in acceptance of her present reality.

And in the course of my conversation, I asked her, how are you able to smile? Are you not angry? And she said with a slight smile, Father, I feel low sometimes, but I am not angry with God or with anyone else. And then she pointed out to the two chairs next to her bed, one positioned straight and the other positioned sidewise. And she said, "Father, in my profession as a counselor, I would sit in this chair and my clients would sit in that chair, and they would pour out their problems to me—personal problems, relationship problems, family problems, and so on. And I would offer them comfort. Now, whenever I feel low, I sit on that chair and Jesus sits in this chair and I pour out my aches and pains, and without fail Jesus offers his comfort to me."

Sisters and brothers, today we celebrate the Exaltation of the Cross. Now, when we think of the cross, the first thought might be uncomfortable or even negative. We hear people say at times, "That is my cross to bear." However, as you and I know very well, the cross is the centre of our faith in our Lord Jesus. For it is through the cross that Jesus saved us and our world from sin and death.

On Good Friday, we reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Today, however, we reflect on the triumph of Jesus. We celebrate the victory of Jesus on the cross.

Now, the core of today's celebration is the infinite love that Jesus manifested on the cross for us through His selfless and perfect sacrifice and the profound mercy that has been poured out into the world, which no darkness can ever overcome.

Now, sisters and brothers, the cross must not simply be a beautiful symbol of our faith. Rather, it must permeate into each one of us, transforming us, making us a new creation in God and in Christ. And when we are transformed, we will ever be grateful for the love and mercy of Jesus in our lives, the love that John speaks of in today's Gospel. And we will always have the courage to offer our daily crosses to the Lord, like the woman I shared about, rather than despairing or seeking a way out or getting upset and angry.

However, that transformation does not happen overnight. It is a process. For some of us, it is a lengthy process. So on this Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, let us open our hearts so that the Lord can pour out His Holy Spirit into us and slowly transform us, transform our lives to become more and more His faithful disciples—who are grateful and who are willing to carry our daily cross and follow Him faithfully.

Amen.