

August 30, 2020

Dear Parishioners

We are disciples of Jesus who are determined to follow him. He said, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” We can learn what this means from what he showed his disciples on their way to Jerusalem.’

“He must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.”

‘He must go.’ ‘Must’ There is no other paths or ways. You cannot circumvent it. If we want to follow after Him, there is a task that we must undertake. We can no longer make excuses. We cannot even try to make a deal with Jesus by presenting other options. We cannot be reluctant to go after Jesus by giving excuses such as ‘I am too busy,” “I am not a capable person,” or “Can I do something else instead?”

‘Go to Jerusalem.’ Jesus was raised and lived in Nazareth, Galilee. For Him, Jerusalem was a place where he went for worshipping God in the temple, not for doing business. Although it was the political and religious hub, Jesus didn’t have important connections there. He wasn’t even welcomed by its vested rights. Still, he went to Jerusalem because it’s the place where he would fulfill his salvific mission through his Passion and Death on the Cross. We are not enthusiastic about going to unfamiliar and dangerous places where we don’t feel welcomed. We try to avoid areas where we may have to deny ourselves by swallowing our pride, giving up our ambition, and abandoning our knowledges and experiences. We tend to stay away from these places and try to make every possible excuse to not go there. However, they are absolutely necessary courses for us to take so as to follow after Jesus.

‘Suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed.’ Jesus used to scold these people for their hypocrisy. Obviously, they were not happy to hear what Jesus said to them. Jesus’ rebukes did not change them, rather intensified their desire to persecute and kill Him. But when the time came, he neither criticized nor protest against them. He simply left himself up to their evil intentions, and in turn, suffered greatly from them

and was killed. Jesus used to raise his voice against them to teach us how to deny oneself who falls silent in the face of injustices and fears to proclaim the truth. The reason that he put himself into the hands of his murderers is to show us how to take up one's cross and follow him who, by carrying his cross and laying down his life, atoned for the sins of the entire human race.

At every moment of our lives, we try to die by denying ourselves. We die when we deny oneself by not compromising on injustices, by not committing sins, by acknowledging one's faults or mistakes, by putting God's grace first instead of our own strengths, and so on. We take up our cross when we persevere in our afflictions that we don't have control over. Physical or mental illnesses or disabilities, financial difficulties, uneasy or unpleasant people, and absence of pleasant person can be examples.

'on the third day be raised.' The life of Jesus did not end with death but resurrection. We are also invited to this destiny. When we deny oneself and take up one's cross, we die for Jesus' sake. But this life is raised in Christ. The daily deaths we undergo are rewarded by daily resurrections we experience. That's why St. Paul convincingly stated in his letter to the Corinthians. "We are always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." This is an effect that takes place when we are thinking as God does not as human beings do.

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