

Life is hard! Life is getting tougher for most everyone these days. Just when we are getting on with the new “normalcy” of life, we go back on lockdown again. We have to “hunker down” as the government ordered for the second time and we don’t know if this is going to be the last lock down.

In a news conference last week, the Honolulu Mayor expressed, “We’re going to see how it goes.”

“We can only hope upon hope, that we can bring down the infection rate, and flatten the curve, if everybody has to do their part to social distance, wear face masks, hand wash, and avoid large gatherings.”

In our gospel reading for this (past) Sunday, we find Jesus saying something very similar to his followers.

He told them about his coming passion, crucifixion and death. It took them by surprise and one even rejected the thought. **“God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you,”** Peter blurted out.

We often tend to say that to our loved ones, don’t we? “Everything will be all right,” we tell them. “Don’t you worry. Neither God nor I will let anything bad happen to you.”

Yet, God let something bad happen to Jesus, didn’t he?

You know, Jesus was going to have to suffer and endure his crucifixion for us, for the best of reasons - reasons which Peter and the other disciples were not yet able to understand.

And you know what, we and our loved ones have to suffer in this world too. We have already endured the pain of isolation and social distancing, the fear of infection and

spread of the coronavirus. We have gone through times of emotional anguish and sufferings, for reasons that we find hard to understand and which will not be clear to us until it is all over.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

None of us can say what tomorrow may bring. There are so many bad things going on in our land today. So many people get infected. So many are hospitalized. So many are afraid. So many already lost their lives to the COVID-19.

There are times in my life when I, like Peter, plead with Jesus, "Lord, don't let this happen." And I sympathize a lot with a sign that reads something like this: "When this day is over, I am going to have a nervous breakdown. When the cross is too heavy to bear, my knees buckle. I have earned it, I deserve it, and no one is going to deprive me of it."

We've all had days like that, times when we wish to let go of our crosses. Even St. Paul had days like that, and yet he could write words like this: "**I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is being revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God . . .**" (Rm 8: 18-19)

That doesn't sound much like a man who is ready to give up, does it? That sounds to me like a man who has learned to deal with tough times.

The prophet Jeremiah too had to face the same situation in his life, as we heard in the First Reading. He was called by God to speak to the people, to "tell it like it is". And as a

consequence, he suffered greatly, enduring much ridicule and scorn.

And at times, that cross seemed too heavy to bear. In Jeremiah's mind the best thing to do would be to quit, to give up, and make things easier for himself. That made the most sense. But in God's mind, well, that was a different story. And so, Jeremiah continued doing what the Lord asked of him, continued to speak in God's name - even in the face of great adversity.

And so, if we think that we are having a tough time right now and find the words of Jesus to take up our crosses and follow him, too difficult to bear or accept, that's ok. But let's not let our difficulty in accepting keep us from placing all our trust in the one who truly knows us best and deeply loves us.

May that deep trust in our hearts strengthen and motivate us to carry our crosses courageously - thereby allowing our lives to be "saved" by the one who died to make that possible.

And may we be numbered among Christ's faithful followers, ". . . **For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory.**" Amen.