

MODOT uses a spokesman who calls himself Major Roads. He barks like a drill sergeant. He tells you about the orange barrels you're going to see on Missouri's highways. He says you're not going to like it, but plan accordingly. Learn where the barrels are going to be, and when you see them, slow down, put down the cell phone and drive carefully. Nobody likes to deal with orange barrels, but we will only have good highways if we put up with them for a while. We have just entered our season of orange barrels at St. Munchin's. You will not like the inconveniences. But they will build us a better highway to heaven.

Jesus made a similar announcement to his disciples. You want to follow me on the road, please do. But just know that there will be orange barrels everywhere. On our journey to God, some of the progress is slow. Jesus gives his disciples the same advice MODOT gives, plan accordingly. You don't start a construction project without assessing your resources; you don't go to war without sizing up your enemy's army. In the spiritual life, know what your resources are and how strong your enemy can be.

In the spiritual life our greatest resource is our faith. We believe in a God who made us and who loves us. Yes, we will have difficult days in life, but we believe we will have better days ahead. We have other resources: a community of believers in our families and among our friends; the word of God in the bible; and the sacraments of our Church that sustain us.

Our greatest enemy is the temptation to sin. Pride, greed, laziness, lust and anger all get in the way of following Christ. They are the dangers that lurk on our path.

To overcome these dangers, Jesus says take up your own cross: "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Don't try to avoid inconvenience. Orange barrels are part of the spiritual journey. The inconveniences of life make us appreciate the hard work required to be faithful to God and loving to our neighbor.

And don't take up somebody else's cross. They have to carry their own. You cannot do it for them. Besides, when you focus on someone else's problems you may be avoiding the hard work of dealing with your own. Carry your own cross, Jesus says. It will be heavy enough.

We all face inconveniences at church, on the highway, in our homes, in our friendships, in our city, and just dealing with our own weaknesses. Orange barrels make us slow down. They force us to deal with other people. Inconveniences put us in touch with who we really are, what we really want, and how restless we become. Through them we will grow to be like Jesus, who overcame sin when he carried his own cross up the road to Calvary.