

Saturday 12th in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 8,5-17): When Jesus entered Capernaum, an army captain approached him to ask his help, «Sir, my servant lies sick at home. He is paralyzed and suffers terribly». Jesus said to him, «I will come and heal him». The captain answered, «I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just give an order and my boy will be healed. For I myself, a junior officer, give orders to my soldiers. And if I say to one: ‘Go’, he goes, and if I say to another: ‘Come’, he comes, and to my servant: ‘Do this’, he does it». When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those who were following him, «I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel. I say to you, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven; but the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness; there they will wail and grind their teeth». Then Jesus said to the captain, «Go home now. As you believed, so let it be». And at that moment his servant was healed.

Jesus went to Peter's house and found Peter's mother-in-law in bed with fever. He took her by the hand and the fever left her; she got up and began to wait on him. Towards evening they brought to Jesus many possessed by evil spirits, and with a word he drove out the spirits. He also healed all who were sick. In doing this he fulfilled what was said by the prophet Isaiah: He bore our infirmities and took on himself our diseases.

«I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just give an order and my boy will be healed»

Today, the Gospel speaks of the centurion's love, of his faith, confidence and humility. Of his deep concern towards his servant. He is so worried about him, that he humiliates before Jesus to ask his help: «Sir, my servant lies sick at home. He is paralyzed and suffers terribly» (Mt 8:6). This concern for others and, even more, for a servant, prompts Jesus' response: «I will come and heal him» (Mt 8:7), which is in turn followed by a series of acts of faith and confidence. The centurion does not consider himself worthy and, along with that feeling, he expresses his own faith in such a way before Jesus and before all those gathered there, that Jesus has to say: «I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel» (Mt 8:10).

We may wonder what impels Jesus to make this miracle. We so very often ask God to no avail, though we know He is always listening! So, what happens, then? We may think we ask properly, but are we sure we do it like the centurion did? His prayer is not selfish, but full of love, humility and confidence. St. Peter Crysologus says: «The power of love does not consider possibilities (...). Love does not discern nor ponders; love does not understand reasons. Love is not resignation before impossibility, nor does it get intimidated before difficulties». Is it like that, my prayer?

«I am not worthy to have you under my roof...» (Mt 8:8). It is the centurion's answer. Do you feel this way? Is your faith like this? «Only faith can explain this mystery. Faith is true knowledge, the principles of which are beyond rational demonstration; for faith makes real for us things beyond intellect and reason» (St. Maximus, confessor). If your faith is such, then you are bound to hear too: «‘Go home now. As you believed, so let it be (...)’ And at that moment his servant was healed» (Mt 8:13).

Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Master of faith, hope and devoted love, show us how to pray so that we may obtain from the Lord that which is best for us.