

Monday 1st of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 8,5-11): 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».

«I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel»

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Capernaum is our city and our village, where there are sick people, some we know, others anonymous, often forgotten because of the hectic rhythm of life that we lead. Loaded with work, we rush about non-stop without thinking of those who, due to their illness or for whatever other circumstance, remain marginalised from the frenetic activity of our world. However, Jesus told us: «Truly, I say to you: whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me» (Mt 25:40). The great thinker Blaise Pascal follows this idea when he says that «in his believers, Jesus finds himself in the agony of Gethsemane until the end of time».

The centurion of Capernaum does not forget about his servant who is ill in bed, because he loves him. In spite of being more powerful and having more authority

than his servant, the centurion is grateful to him because of all his years of help and appreciates him very much. Because of that, he approaches Jesus, and in the Saviour's presence, manages to make an extraordinary confession of faith, seen in the liturgy of the Eucharist: «I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just give an order and my servant will be healed» (Mt 8:8). This confession is based on hope; it comes from the centurion's faith in the Lord and, at the same time, from his feeling of lack personal worthiness, which makes him aware of his own neediness.

We can only approach Jesus with a humble attitude, like that of the centurion. That way we can live the hope of Advent: the hope of salvation and life, of reconciliation and peace. Only he who acknowledges his poverty and realizes that the meaning of life is not to be found in himself, but in God, in turning his life over to Him, can really have hope. Let's approach Christ confidently, and, at the same time, make the centurion's prayer our own.