

Sunday 5th July 2020

Call to worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Father, you have brought us to the beginning of a new week. We offer our lives and hearts to you. May we always do your will and love our neighbour as ourselves. Amen.

Confession

Merciful God, we are sorry for our unfaithfulness to the love you show us by the gift of life and the greater gift of union with you through the grace of baptism. Lord, we beg you to forgive our sins and to heal the wounds that our sins have caused. We thank you, Lord, for your mercy that brought us to repent and for the forgiveness that you offer so freely when we truly repent.

(Silence)

Assurance of Pardon

The almighty and merciful Lord forgives you from all your sins.

In gratitude we say:

God of love, give us a heart to love you and to love one another; through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

Amen

New Testament Reading:

The Gospel of Matthew 8:5-13

⁵When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him ⁶and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, in terrible distress.' ⁷And he said to him, 'I will come and cure him.' ⁸The centurion answered, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go", and he goes, and to another, "Come", and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this", and the slave does it.' ¹⁰When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, 'Truly I tell you, in no one ^[d] in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.' And the servant was healed in that hour.

This is the word of the Lord

Reflection

Just before this event Jesus healed a man with leprosy. This man went to Jesus for healing. But here the centurion went to Jesus on behalf of one of his servants. So, first of all, he is showing compassion; secondly, he is showing his respect to Jewish laws by saying that he is not worthy to receive Jesus under his roof. The centurion is a gentile and an officer of the invading army, and yet, he believes in Jesus. He believes that Jesus does not need to go to his house to heal the sick servant. As he, the centurion, has authority from his superiors to direct the lives of those under his command, he believes that Jesus has authority from God himself that He can exercise over the lower powers that are making the servant sick. By drawing from the experience in his own life, the centurion explains what he believes about Jesus and his power. This is why Jesus is amazed. The centurion is showing to have such a clear

faith in Jesus and who He is. Therefore, Jesus makes a reference to the Old Testament about the children of God who will gather from all parts of the world to be reunited with God's people in Jerusalem. Also, Jesus' words remind us of what John the Baptist said about who will be part of God's people. It is not enough or even necessary to have a hereditary link with Abraham. One must repent and believe in Jesus in order to be part of the true Israel, the true people of God.

The centurion shows such faith when he encounters the Lord. He does not take God for granted. This Roman soldier does not feel good enough to have Jesus coming under the roof of his house. That is a sense of inadequacy that Peter felt when he realised that Jesus was the Christ. That is the sense of inadequacy that we feel when we realise that we are in the presence of the Lord. It is spiritually healthy to feel like the centurion did because it shows that we are not taking God for granted and we are giving God the due respect.

The centurion did not tell Jesus what to do, he only explains to Jesus what the problem is and waits for Jesus' response. Here is true faith. The centurion did not tell God how to be God, he just presented the problem to God. Very often, when we pray, we ask God to do things for us in a way that it's like if we are telling God how to be God! Perhaps, that is why sometimes our prayers are not answered. Perhaps, sometimes we put faith in ourselves (and our self-righteousness) rather than God. Of course, the centurion wants Jesus to heal his servant, but he does not ask that to Jesus. He waits for Jesus to say what He is going to do. That, in itself, is a sign of faith. And Jesus saw that.

Even more faith is shown when the centurion says that he is not worthy to have Jesus under his roof. The centurion's words echo the words of the congregation at Holy Communion in the Catholic tradition. I remember saying those words when I was a teenager just before Communion "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be saved". In these words, we acknowledge our unworthiness to have Jesus enter the roof of our souls, yet we trust in Jesus saving our souls as He becomes the most intimate guest within us when we receive Him in the Holy Communion and in our everyday relationship with Him.

Therefore, open your heart to Jesus and let Him in to dwell in there for ever. We are not worthy to receive Him but He chooses to enter the roof of our souls. Jesus made

a choice to come to us. How are you going to receive Him? Learn from the centurion's faith and let Jesus' word heal your soul today.

Amen

Hymn: Click [here](#) for an online link to the hymn "Be still for the presence of the Lord"

Prayer of Intercession:

Gracious God, rejoicing in your blessings, trusting in your loving care for all we bring you our prayers for the world.

We pray for those who are trying to rebuild our world after suffering from the consequences of this pandemic. Indeed, many are still suffering and many are still getting sick. Lord we lift before you all that is happening and we trust in your loving grace. We think in particular of the sick and those who have become poor and in need.

We pray for those who are suffering loneliness, despair, pain or loss. Lord, we pray that they may know the light and love of your Kingdom in this life and the next.

We pray for your Church. Help us, Lord, to find ways to communicate the good news of your love to those you call to yourself; and to care for them in new ways so that we will all stay safe and enjoy fellowship with you and with one another.

Amen

The Lord's prayer

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Benediction:

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini