



1) PRAYER

Holy Father, through Jesus your Son, the Word made flesh for us, send me your Holy Spirit, that my ears may be opened to hear the “letter of love” that you have written to me and enlighten my mind that I may understand it in depth. Make my heart docile that it may receive your will with joy and help me to give witness to it. Amen.

2) READING

From the Gospel according to Luke (7:1-10)

When he had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him. When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us." And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

3) MEDITATION

- Chapter 7 of the gospel of Luke helps us to receive the call addressed to the pagans to adhere to faith in the Lord Jesus. The figure of the centurion becomes the pacesetter for all those who want to abide by the faith of Israel and then encounter and know the face of the Father in Jesus. In the meditation on this Gospel, we are also proposed to open ourselves to faith or to make our confidence in the Word of the Lord more firmly unshaken. Let us try, then, to follow, with our hearts, the paces of this Roman centurion, so that in him we may also be present.

- Perhaps the first aspect that emerges from the reading of the passage is the situation of suffering in which the centurion finds himself. Try to hear more attentively the words

that try to give light to this reality. Capernaum, a border city, a city apart, on the margins, a city where the blessings of God seem slow to arrive. The grave illness; the imminent death of a dear person.

- But we soon see that the Lord enters into this situation, coming to share in it, to live in it with his loving presence. The words in italics confirm this truth: “asking him to come”; “and Jesus went with them”; “he was only a short distance.” It is wonderful to see this movement of Jesus who moves near to him who calls him, who searches for him and who asks for salvation. This is how Jesus acts with each one of us.

- But it is also very useful to enter into contact with the figure of the centurion, who is here a bit like our master, our guide on the way of faith. “When he heard about Jesus”. He received the announcement, he heard the good news and held it in his heart. He did not let it escape and did not close his ears to life. He remembered Jesus and now he goes in search for him.

- “He sent.” Twice does the centurion carry out his action: first sending the elders of the people to Jesus, authoritative figures, then by sending his friends. Luke uses two different verbs and this helps us to understand better that in this man something took place, a state of passage: he became more and more open to the encounter with Jesus. Sending his friends is a bit like going to Jesus himself.

“asking him to come and save.” Two beautiful verbs that explain the whole intensity of his request to Jesus. He wants Jesus to come, to be near, to enter into his poor life, to come and visit his pain. It is a declaration of love, of great faith, because it is as if he was saying: “Without you, I cannot live anymore. Come!” And he does not ask for any mere salvation, a superficial healing, as the particular verb chosen by Luke helps us to understand. In fact, here it is a traverse salvation, one that crosses the entirety of life, of the entire person, and is capable of taking a person beyond, past every obstacle, every difficulty or trial, beyond even death.

- “I am not worthy.” Luke puts these words in the mouth of the centurion twice, and these words help us to understand the great transformation that has taken place within himself. He feels unworthy, incapable, insufficient, as the two different greek terms used here indicate. Perhaps the first conquest on the road of faith with Jesus is exactly this: the discovery of our great need for Him, for his presence and the more certain knowledge that alone we can do nothing because we are poor, we are sinners. However, precisely because of this we are infinitely loved!

- “Say the word.” Here is the great leap, the great transformation in faith. The centurion now believes in a clear, serene and faithful way. While Jesus walked towards him, he was also completing his own interior journey, changing, becoming a new man. First, he welcomed the person of Jesus, then his word. For him it is the Lord as he is, his word is efficacious, true, powerful, able to do what he says. All of his doubts have

crumbled; nothing remains but faith, the certain confidence in salvation, in Jesus.

4) QUESTIONS

- Does my prayer feel like that of the centurion, addressed to Jesus to come and save? Am I also ready to explain to the Lord my uneasiness, my need for him? Am I perhaps ashamed to present to him the sickness, the death that lives in my house, in my life? What do I need in order to fulfill this first step in trust?
- And if I open my heart in prayer, to the invocation, if I invite the Lord to come, what is the profound attitude of my heart? Is there also in me, as in the centurion, the knowledge of being unworthy, of not being sufficient solely of myself, of not being pretentious? Do I know how to place myself before the Lord with that humility that comes from love, from serene trust in Him?
- Is his Word good enough for me? Do I ever listen to it in its entirety with attention, with respect, even though, perhaps, I am not able to fully understand it? And in this moment, what is the word that I want to hear from the mouth of the Lord for me? What do I want Him to say to me?
- The pagan centurion had such a great faith...and I, who am Christian, what faith do I have? Perhaps it is true that I must pray like this: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

5) FINAL PRAYER

Your words are a lamp for my steps, Lord!

How can a youth keep his way pure?

By observing your word.

With all my heart I search for you:

do not let me deviate from your commands.

Put again into my heart your promise

that I may not sin against you.

Blessed are you, Lord:

teach me your decrees.

With my mouth I recount

all of the wisdom from your mouth.

On the way of your teachings is my joy,
more than all other riches.

I want to meditate on your precepts,
to consider your ways.

In your decrees is my delight,

I will not forget your word.