

## IV EPIPHANY 2022

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

##### ST. MATTHEW 8.1-13



They were two men from different backgrounds...different cultures. One was a Jew...the other a Gentile. Their common plea..."Jesus, help me!"

Jesus has just finished speaking to a large crowd of people from hillside near the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee...his famous *Sermon on the Mount*. Matthew tells us the crowd was amazed at the way he taught...he taught with authority!

On his way down from the hill...Jesus encounters a man with a skin condition that would have made him an outcast...from his family...his friends...and his faith community. Any skin condition was suspect. He is desperate. Even though he is keeping his distance...he didn't want to make Jesus an outcast...Jesus isn't afraid to touch him and heal him. We know this first man was Jewish...Jesus tells him to go see the priest and let him certify he was cured.

Jesus and his disciples and the large crowd followed him into Capernaum. There Jesus meets a Roman Officer...the KJV calls him a Centurion. He too is an outcast...a Gentile...a representative of the occupying forces. For the large Jewish population of Capernaum...the Roman Officer is no better than the man with the skin condition...someone to be avoided.

The Roman Officer pleads with Jesus to come and heal his servant who his home sick in bed, paralyzed and suffering terribly...we don't know from what. Jesus tells the Officer he will come immediately to his house and make him well. The Greek word *pais*...translated *servant*...could also mean *child* or *son*. Regardless...the Roman Officer shows he cares for and loves his servant and wants him to be well.

Our Roman Officer's response seems to surprise Jesus. He tells Jesus he doesn't deserve to have him come into his house. He tells Jesus he is used to being given orders from his superior officers...and his gives orders to soldiers under him. He tells Jesus all he needs to do is give the order...and his servant will be well again.

The Roman Officer's is a man with authority (who gives orders). But he recognizes Jesus has greater authority (and gives greater orders)...Jesus has the power to heal...the greatest authority of all. Jesus also shows he isn't afraid to break barriers...he was willing to go into the house of the outcast Roman Officer...Jesus' power to heal is universal...he will not be bound by people's prejudices. "Go home", Jesus tells our Roman Officer friend, "Your servant is well again!"

The Roman Officer was also willing to break barriers. Saint Luke gives us some additional information...he tells us the man was friendly toward the Jewish Community in Capernaum and gave money to help rebuild their synagogue. He may have earned a certain amount of respect from the religious leaders.

In both of the healing miracles in the Gospel we see powerful demonstrations of faith and humility. The Jewish man with the skin condition isn't concerned about any embarrassment and humiliation at being seen in public aside...and reaches out to Jesus for healing. The Roman Official knows he has power and authority over people...but doesn't care what people think when he asks Jesus to heal his servant. Both men believe Jesus can heal...they don't ask for a magic show...they don't ask Jesus to prove himself...his word is good enough!

We memorialize today's Gospel at every Mass in the Prayer of Humble Access our total reliance on God's mercy to heal...and the following words paraphrased from the Gospel and said just before we receive Holy Communion...

*...“Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only and my soul shall be healed.”*

Our "roof" is our hearts, minds and souls. What Jesus offers us is healing. We just have to ask for his help...and like the men in the Gospel...believe his word is good enough!

