*Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)*

**Luke 7:1-10**

**1 When Jesus had come to the end of all he wanted the people to hear, he went into Capernaum. 2 A centurion there had a servant, a favourite of his, who was sick and near death. 3 Having heard about Jesus he sent some Jewish elders to him to ask him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus they pleaded earnestly with him. ‘He deserves this of you,’ they said, 5 ‘because he is friendly towards our people; in fact, he is the one who built the synagogue.’ 6 So Jesus went with them, and was not very far from the house when the centurion sent word to him by some friends: ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘do not put yourself to trouble; because I am not worthy to have you under my roof; 7 and for this same reason I did not presume to come to you myself; but give the word and let my servant be cured. 8 For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man: Go, and he goes; to another: Come here, and he comes; to my servant: Do this, and he does it.’ 9 When Jesus heard these words he was astonished at him and, turning round, said to the crowd following him, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found faith like this.’ 10 And when the messengers got back to the house they found the servant in perfect health.**

Other readings: 1 Kings 8:41-43 Psalm 116 (117) Galatians 1:1-2,6-10

This is an extraordinary miracle story. Jesus meets neither the critically ill servant nor the centurion. It is a healing from a distance. In this healing, and in another such example of a healing from a distance, that of the daughter of the Canaanite woman recounted in Mark chapter 7, the beneficiaries are pagans. In both cases Jesus works a miracle for pagans but he observes Jewish custom and does not enter a Gentile house.

There are two sets of intermediaries who approach Jesus. The Jewish elders initially take the centurion’s request to Jesus, and they are full of admiration for the pagan centurion. ‘He loves our people,’ they tell Jesus. He has generously funded the building of the synagogue. His goodness should be rewarded, they maintain.

The centurion changes his tactics half way through the story. As Jesus approaches the house, he sends ‘friends’ to tell Jesus that it will be quite enough to ‘say the word’. The centurion knows from experience that a command given out will be obeyed, and he considers that Jesus has similar power to command in his healing work. Furthermore, in sensitivity to Jewish custom regarding Gentiles, he expresses the conviction that Jesus does not need to enter his house.

The centurion’s faith and his kindness are amply rewarded. The Gentile centurion becomes an example of faith, faith such as Jesus has not witnessed among the chosen people.

*How supportive am I of the differing faith convictions of others?*

*How do I balance my fidelity to Christian faith with appreciation of the faith of others?*

*Let us pray for humility, and a readiness to listen to those of other cultural and religious traditions.*

*Let us recognise goodness wherever it is to be found.*