

SERMON
(4th Sunday of Matthew), (Mt. 8:5-13)
(28 June 2026)

Today's Gospel reading presents us with yet another miracle of healing — a miracle whose accomplishment, one might say, challenges our logic and moral expectations. It is a miracle performed for a Gentile, a pagan, someone who possessed none of the qualifications that the religious establishment of Christ's time considered necessary in order for a person to receive God's blessing.

And herein lies the great paradox: a Roman centurion — that is, a representative of the Roman authority hated by the Jews — a foreigner, an outsider, and a pagan, comes to Christ and asks Him to heal his servant, who was lying at home paralysed and gravely ill. Christ does not answer him by saying, "You are an unbeliever, you are a Gentile," but instead says, "I will come to your house and heal him." And the centurion replies: "Lord, do not come, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Even from here, if You only speak a word, my servant will be healed." Indeed, Christ, as the all-powerful God, could perform the miracle from afar. Yet by offering to visit the centurion's home, He wished to test his faith — not because He, as God, did not know it, but in order to take occasion from the man's confession and set him forth as an example to others. So astonishing is the confession of this Roman officer that Christ says: "Not even in all Israel have I found such great faith."

It is truly worth examining the characteristics of the centurion's faith that make it so unique that Christ speaks these words about him. The first and most essential characteristic is his absolute trust in the Person of Christ and in His words. The centurion does not approach Christ thinking he will meet merely a philosopher, a teacher, or a rabbi, but someone who possesses authority over life and death — that is, the almighty God Himself. This is the primary and foundational mark of true faith. Secondly, the centurion's faith is distinguished by a profound and sincere humility: "Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." The heart of this man must have been extraordinarily sensitive, and his mind remarkably refined, for although he was far from the spiritual experience of divine grace, he nevertheless understood that humility is the greatest virtue. And not only did he understand it — he lived it naturally and genuinely, even though he himself was a man of authority. The third characteristic of the centurion's faith, which reveals precisely this sensitive heart, is his concern and anguish for his servant who was suffering. Slaves in that era, as you know, according to Roman law were considered *rēs* ("things") rather than persons. Their lives had little value, and their masters possessed absolute authority over them. Yet the centurion does not think this way. For him, the servant is a fellow human being who suffers and is in need.

All these things moved Christ to say that the centurion's faith was so great that there was none like it in all Israel. And this is something that should trouble and challenge us all, leading us to examine our own faith. Are we truly ready for the Lord to visit us? In what condition would He find "the house of our soul" if He chose to enter it? And indeed, dear brothers and sisters, the Lord visits us every time we approach to receive Holy Communion, the sacred Body and Blood of Christ. Have we reflected on the conditions with which we approach? Do we firmly believe and confess, by both our words and our deeds, that the One whom we receive is the true God? Do we come with humility, fear of God, and awareness of our sinfulness and unworthiness? Or do we imagine ourselves ready and worthy? Do we possess love, care, and concern for our neighbour, or are we filled with indifference — and worse still, with hatred and envy?

Let us reflect on all these things, my brothers and sisters. Let us imitate the faith of the centurion, and let us not deceive ourselves like those Jews who said, "We are descendants of Abraham," imagining that they alone were "sons of the Kingdom." Otherwise, we too may lose the Kingdom and condemn ourselves to darkness.