

First Monday of Advent, December 29

Is 2:1-5, Mt 8:5-11

It's that time of the year again when the Holidays celebrations commence. The Magnificent Mile's Parade of lights last weekend marked the beginning of the Holiday season here in Chicago. We had just finished celebrating Thanksgiving and the Christmas season is now in full swing all over the city with the festive lights, the Christmas markets, the hustle and bustle of gift shopping and all those wonderful Christmas get-togethers, from family dinners, brunch with friends and all those work parties.

In the middle of all the festive celebrations, we sometimes forget the true meaning of Christmas, and that this is a celebration of Christ's birth, that God sent his only son to be born of a Virgin in a manger to save us all from sin. Moreover, it is through faith that we believe in all this, which something so big can come from someone with such humility.

In addition, faith and humility is what today's Gospel highlights for the first Monday of Advent.

During the time of Jesus, the Roman army was an efficient killing machine, with centurions leading the way. Centurions were Roman officers who were in charge of 100 soldiers and it was very unlikely, bizarre even, to find one hanging out with Jewish leaders. Yet, in today's Gospel, the centurion came to Jesus Christ for help for his servant, paralyzed and in pain. That man's faith in Christ was so strong that Jesus healed the servant from a great distance. It is also from this Gospel reading that the words, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed," was hailed, with "servant" having been changed to "soul" and what we recite prior to receiving the Body of Christ.

Do we have the same faith as the centurion in today's Gospel? The same humility to bend our knees, ask Jesus for our needs in prayer and believe that in His way, our prayers are and will be answered? On the other hand, are we so blinded by our own hubris that we think we can and will do everything our way, whether or not it is in alignment with God's will?

During this season of love and giving, may we remember that all good things come from God, and that Jesus is the reason for the season. May we all continue to have faith in the Lord and the humility to ask and accept His will in our lives, even if we do not immediately see it because He is working from a distance, just as He healed the centurion's servant from afar.

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