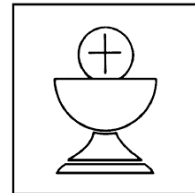


LITURGY BYTES

“Lord I Am Not Worthy”

The above captioned words are familiar as we say them each week at Mass. You might be asking, where do these words come from? Actually, it is a powerful and true faith story that appears in the Gospels, in both Matthew and Luke.



It is the story of the Roman Centurion who has heard of Jesus and his great deeds. The Centurion seeks out Jesus to help him because his servant is paralyzed and in pain. Jesus agrees and offers to come to the Centurion's home to cure the servant. It is here that the Centurion utters these immensely powerful words: *“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.”*

The Centurion was a Gentile and was considered ineligible for the promises the Lord made to the Israelites, the Chosen people. However, the Centurion had faith that Jesus could heal his servant. He even called Jesus “Lord.” Because of this, Jesus was willing to go to his house, even though it was forbidden and, according to Jewish standards, would make Jesus unclean. In the end, this story speaks of great faith and about what Jesus would do to bring health, wholeness, and salvation.

It is not a surprise that the Church would put these words of the Centurion in our mouths as we prepare to receive the gift of the Eucharist at Mass. Keep in mind that this revised translation of the Roman Missal is not emphasizing our “unworthiness.” Truly, none of us is worthy of so great a gift as the Eucharist. It is not on merit that we are admitted to this great banquet. Rather, *it is our faith in Jesus*—the same faith as had by the Centurion! God's grace given in the sacrament of the Eucharist is a free gift. We need only respond and accept this gift. The full response of the Centurion helps us to recognize that Christ's promise of health, wholeness, and salvation is ours if we accept the invitation. That promise is fulfilled in the Eucharist!

Have a safe, healthy, and blessed week! ~~*Michele Hahn*