

A Roman Centurion Takes Jesus at His Word (Matthew 8:5-13)

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Guidelines: Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts.

Ignatian Meditation Process: Ignatius chose this Gospel reading for Week 2 of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Read the introduction and then “ask for the grace.” Then quietly read the passage by using your imagination to enter into the story, sensing and feeling what's going on. Don't analyze the passage or seek insights — *experience yourself as a character in the story*. After the second reading have a “colloquy” (short, personal conversation) with the Lord. You can use the prompts and questions at the bottom to guide your prayer time and journaling (and sharing with others).

Introduction: Jesus has just preached his Sermon on the Mount in which he proclaims that the Kingdom of the Heavens is open to all people and then he manifests its blessing and power by healing a leper. Then in Capernaum a high ranking Roman soldier approaches the Master in desperation, asking him to heal his servant who is bed-ridden and pain-wracked. Jesus agrees to come help him, but the captain insists that he doesn't need to trouble himself to travel to his house. Instead if he'd just say the word then his servant would be healed. Jesus commends his great faith — he understands that *kingdoms work by words of confidence in God* — saying he's the vanguard of many outsiders pouring into God's kingdom. Then the Lord gives the verbal order and the servant is immediately healed!

Ask For the Grace: Lord Jesus, I ask for the grace I desire: to know you more intimately, to love you more intensely, and to follow you more closely.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Matthew 8 (MSG)

5-6 As Jesus entered the village of Capernaum, a Roman captain came up in a panic and said, “Master, my servant is sick. He can't walk. He's in terrible pain.”

7 Jesus said, “I'll come and heal him.”

8-9 “Oh, no,” said the captain. “I don't want to put you to all that trouble. Just give the order and my servant will be fine. I'm a man who takes orders and gives orders. I tell one soldier, ‘Go,’ and he goes; to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

10-12 Taken aback, Jesus said, “I've yet to come across this kind of simple trust in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how he works. This man is the vanguard of many outsiders who will soon be coming from all directions—streaming in from the east, pouring in from the west, sitting down at God's kingdom banquet alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then those who grew up ‘in the faith’ but had no faith will find themselves out in the cold, outsiders to grace and wondering what happened.”

13 Then Jesus turned to the captain and said, “Go. What you believed could happen has happened.” At that moment his servant became well.

1st Reading: Visualize yourself in the Gospel story. Don't seek intellectual insights — stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?

2nd Reading: Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?