Luke 7:1-10
When Jesus had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum.
A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him.
When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave.
They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us."
And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come here, and he comes; and to my slave, Do this, and he does it."
When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."
When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Our Scripture Reflection
Luke’s Gospel has been called “The Gospel of the Gentiles” because he pictures the pagan Gentiles in a very favorable light. Such is the case in our Scripture for today. Luke tells us about an unpresumptuous Roman commander of 100 soldiers (Centurian) who sends Jewish elders to ask Jesus to heal his slave. We get a glimpse into this powerful officer’s heart when we take into account that the slave is most likely a Jew who would have been considered essentially a non-person by the Romans. Yet this man has compassion for the slave. Jesus is astounded that the Centurian does not ask that He come to His residence, but rather, that He simply given the command from a distance that the Centurian’s slave be healed. His request is granted immediately. At this point in the Gospel, none of the Jews, none of His own disciples have expressed such compassion and faith. The pagan is pictured as a model of true faith!

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Food for your Journey

Dr. Harold Koenig, an associate professor of psychiatry at Duke University School of Medicine, and Director, Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke, is considered to be a pioneer in the scientific study of the potential of spiritual healing. After studying thousands of people since 1984, Dr. Koenig found that religious faith not only promotes overall good health, but also aids in recovery from serious illness. "By praying to God," Koenig said, religious patients "acquire an indirect form of control over their illness." They believe that they are not alone in their struggle and God is personally interested in them. This safeguards them against the psychological isolation that batters so many people with serious disease. In a study of 455 elderly hospital patients, for example, Koenig found that people who attended church more than once a week averaged about four days in the hospital. People who never or rarely attended church spent about 10 to 12 days hospitalized. When Koenig initially began telling his colleagues about these observations, many were skeptical. They saw spiritual healing as irrelevant to medical science. In recent years, however, more scientific journals have been publishing reports with similar findings. More and more doctors are beginning to understand that faith can have a role in healing. A Dartmouth Medical School study found that heart patients were 14 times more likely to die following a surgery if they did not participate in group activities and did not find comfort in religion. Within six months of surgery, 21 patients had died; but there were no deaths among the 37 people who said that they were "deeply religious." Researchers in Israel studied 3,900 people living on kibbutzim over a 16-year period. Their findings: The religious had a 40 percent lower death rate from cardiovascular disease and cancer than their secular peers. A Yale University study of 28,212 elderly people found that those who rarely or never attended church had twice the stroke rate of weekly churchgoers.

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A Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, Like the Roman Centurian in today’s Gospel passage, help me to grow in my ability to trust You in all things. Forgive my weakness in faith and give healing to me and my family. Amen