

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Confidence and Humility in Prayer

“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Matt., 8:2)

The Gospel of today relates two extraordinary miracles performed by Our Divine Lord--the healing of a leper and the cure of the centurion's servant. In both instances the miracle was performed as the result of a humble, confiding prayer, the first addressed to our Saviour by the leper, the second by the centurion.

It is interesting to note that both petitioners merely stated their needs and professed their belief that Christ was able to perform a miracle, without explicitly asking help—*“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”*... *“Lord, my servant is lying sick... but only say the word and my servant will be healed.”* In other words, the underlying idea in the prayer was a deep confidence in the power of Christ to help a suffering person, even though a miracle was necessary.

When we pray, this same spirit of confidence should permeate our petition. We know that God is our Heavenly Father, kindly and loving, anxious to hear and to answer our petitions. We have the assurance of Christ Himself, frequently repeated, that whatever we ask in prayer will be granted us. And so, when we pray, it should be with the sentiment of confidence manifested by the leper and the centurion.

With the **decline** of faith, the practice of prayer departs. There are some Catholics who have resource to prayer **only** when all other means have been tried unsuccessfully. Those who have the true spirit of faith, pray as soon as they are in need. They know, of course, that they may not obtain the particular favour they seek, when there is question of some temporal good; but they also know that some other favour will be granted, particularly the grace to be **patient** and **resigned** to the will of God.

We note in the prayer of the centurion another necessary quality--humility. **“Lord, I am not worthy,”** he says. We cannot expect to receive favours through prayer unless we realise that we are truly unworthy that God should hear us. Yet, this very spirit of humility should increase our confidence, since God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. The humility of the centurion is the more noteworthy in view of his prominence and authority. It is a reminder that even those who are great in the eyes of the world must humble themselves when they seek favours from God.

Practical Application

Strive to acquire the habit of seeking God's help in prayer whenever you realise that you are in need, *especially* **spiritual** need. But let your prayer be filled with *confidence* in the power *and* goodness of God *and* with the *spirit* of humility in view of your own unworthiness.