



“...you were free in regard to righteousness ... the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.”

Romans 6:18-23

The faith of the centurion springs forth from the love he has for the suffering servant. It is, in a way, no surprise to find him by the cross of Christ, depicted on the cross of St. Damian, as father showed us at the refuge last year.

Mary stands by the cross, loving Jesus as a mother loves her suffering child, wounded by the sin of the world, which is unable to receive his love and innocence. The beloved disciple loves Jesus as his teacher and master, the one who loved him and gave him a name. It is the love of the adopted son for his father. Mary

Magdalene loves Him by the cross in the light of the resurrection, a light she foresaw in her heart when Jesus cast seven demons out of her, bringing her from hell to life. She is the first to encounter Him by the tomb, because the light of Pascha not only pierces the soul with life but also embraces, in eternal communion, the one who had been cast into the depths of hell.

The centurion stands by the cross because he loves the suffering servant. For the one who serves does so out of love, and the centurion, having witnessed that love every day, could not help but be moved by it, deep within his heart. He loves his servant because the genuine love of the one who serves overwhelms the heart of the one who holds power. It changes his heart. In that transformation of heart, holiness is revealed to the soul. And through that revelation comes the hope of eternal life. As the Holy Apostle Paul tells us today in the Epistle to the Romans, these are the fruits of compassion, the “freedom of righteousness.”

The centurion’s prayer is the prayer of one whose heart is broken out of love for the one who is tormented and dying. A heart that holds compassion also tastes eternal life. And that is the place of prayer, the place where the centurion meets Christ. By the cross of St. Damian, he blesses Him, because he knows that God is the God of the living. Is he the only one who sees this at the foot of the cross? Or rather, is he the only one who holds faith in his heart that, through the cross, the beginning of new life will be revealed to the world?

And yet, he does not speak aloud. Instead, he prays in silence, within his broken heart. With his head lifted high, he gazes at Christ, whose compassion touches all, and whose eyes bear witness to a love that can be seen by all. And yet, it is the centurion who looks deeper, seeking in His eyes the witness of eternal life. To see, through them, the light of Pascha. His

countenance is prayerful, a vigil in the night, in the darkness, searching for the light that shines and cannot be overcome. He searches for this light in the eyes of the one who is about to die. Prayer brings forth hope, and through that hope, faith. A faith that does not demand the physical presence of the healer in his house, but only a Word, and the servant shall be made well. For it is the Word that gives life. The centurion prays for the Word, which is God's desire and the expression of His love for the world. He prays for the restoration of man on his bed of death.

And yet, the one who has compassion for the suffering servant lives, within his soul, with the experience of unworthiness, feeling unworthy to be visited by the Incarnate Word of God. This is not a false humility, but the deep reality of a compassionate soul. The one who truly loves the suffering servant knows he is unworthy of such love. He feels unworthy because his love cannot heal. He loves his servant, who has served him well and with love, yet the centurion's own love cannot bring peace or restoration. Because the love of man leads to prayer, while the love of God leads to healing, restoration, and new life.

The centurion's love is real and so is his sense of unworthiness. And both lead him to prayer. Prayer, in turn, leads to an encounter with the Word who, on the cross, recognizes his faith. It is at the cross that the faith of the centurion finds the freedom to be.

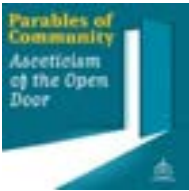
A suffering brother who can no longer serve

Our brother, when he visits us for food or rest, often keeps his eyes closed. He seems to be constantly seeking sleep. His expression may appear calm, but it is not; it's simply worn by exhaustion. He worked as a security guard for many years, only to lose his job a few months ago, because of depression. Clinical depression, which causes him severe headaches.

He does not look well. He walks with great difficulty. Just watching him descend the stairs at the mission fills one with fear that he might lose his balance at any moment. He is divorced and lives alone. Having come from the Philippines 30 years ago, he now finds himself in the abyss of depression, where faith is deeply tested. He suffers, physically and mentally, and it is clearly visible. Yet no one seems to care for this servant who can no longer serve. He appears lost, even condemned. How long can he go on like this? Walking in constant fear of collapsing? Medication helps, but it is no miracle, it cannot restore him or intercede in the way his soul longs for. Despite all his challenges, he asks for only one thing: prayer. He blesses the community through his gratitude, which he expresses with sincerity, and pleads for prayer because his suffering is unbearable. He seeks prayer because he has never truly experienced being cared for. He hopes that this time, prayer might lead to love in the heart of the one who prays.

During our reflection on Friday, people were moved by the love of the centurion for his servant. They said it should help us understand that those in positions of authority, even the simple authority of sharing food or hospitality in community, have a responsibility to carry and to pray for others.

If the centurion prayed for his suffering servant out of love, then we too, in remembering one another in prayer, can hope that compassion will one day find a place in our hearts. Touched daily by the suffering and loneliness of those the world has forgotten, we are called to learn to pray more deeply. And to receive the witness of new life through the eyes of those who are condemned to death. To receive without wasting. To allow for the encounter to touch our hearts and not to hide it from the world. Because it is for the sake of this world that the Word is given.



Please listen to mission stories on ancient faith radio, share this with your friends.

<https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/parables/>

The logo for St Silouan Chapel, featuring a circular emblem with a cross, a crown, and the text 'NYSSA' at the bottom.	<p>St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmmission.org W: stjohnsmmission.org</p> <p>St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3 T: 647-358-4105</p> <p>We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa</p>	The logo for St Zoticos Orthodox Church, featuring a circular emblem with a cross and the text 'ST JOHN'S MISSION' around the perimeter.
--	--	--

St. Silouan Chapel, July 6, 2025

©2025 St. John the Compassionate Mission

3 of 3

www.stjohnsmmission.org