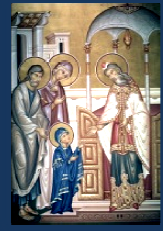


July 10, 2011

Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



Sunday, July 10, 2011

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

This morning's Gospel gives the familiar account of the Centurion who comes to the Lord, pleading with him to heal his servant.

The first thing we need to understand about this is that the Centurion, a Roman officer in command of 100 soldiers (which was a legion), is of course a pagan Roman Gentile, not a Jew. So, once again we see how Christ came not just to the Jews but to all, regardless of their ethnic, racial, religious, national, or social background.

After the Centurion asked the Lord to heal his servant, the Lord said simply, "I will come and heal him"—although some scholars have speculated that this may be better translated as "Shall I come?" Either way, the Lord's response is important, because for an observant Jew to enter the house of a non-Jew would render him ritually unclean in the eyes of the Jews. Yet the Lord showed no hesitation about this.

But the Centurion, recognizing Christ's authority, called Him Lord—"Adonai" in the ancient language—a title that was used only in reference to God Himself. He understood that only God can have authority over illness and disease, and this man, Christ, demonstrated that He also had authority or power over death. This Roman soldier, though he was not a Jew *or* a follower of Christ, yet showed extreme humility when he responded: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof." (How many of us have this humble thought when we are approaching to receive Holy Communion?)

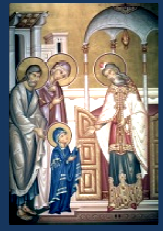
And Jesus, hearing this, said to all those around Him—and there was a crowd--: "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, no, not even in Israel." By the way, there are two occasions in Scripture when Christ expressed His astonishment at the belief or lack of belief of others—once in His hometown, when His own fellow people in Nazareth rejected Him, and then on this present occasion, when a heathen Gentile soldier confessed his absolute belief in Christ.

So disappointed was the Savior in the lack of trust and faith in Him generally demonstrated by His fellow Jews that on this occasion He then went on to say something very severe, yet very prophetic about the Jews, whom He called "the sons of the Kingdom": "The Sons of the Kingdom," He declared unequivocally, "shall be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Thus did He dismiss His own people from the plan of salvation, unless they repented and came unto Him, which, as a people, they did not do, no not even to this day. This, by the way, is not to be interpreted as an excuse for anti-Semitism *of any kind*. But it is a clear reminder that we may not continue to see the Jews as the

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avored “Chosen People”, as many other Christians do. The Holy Fathers teach that they lost that privilege, that designation, and that inheritance when they rejected the Son of God, who had been sent specifically to them and for them.

The Lord then told the Centurion that his servant was healed and the Centurion, on returning home, found that this was indeed so, and he marveled all the more.

Now, on a negative note, I must make mention—if you haven’t already come across this in our very corrupt and degraded culture—of the fact that the so-called “religious part” of the gay community teaches its followers today that the Centurion was gay and his servant, a boy, was his paramour. This is seen as scriptural evidence supporting pedophilia. I need make no further comment about this.

But on a positive and more happy note, it’s worth telling you that there is a minor tradition in the Church that the Centurion in this Gospel account is the same Roman soldier who later stood at the foot of the Cross and proclaimed to all, “Truly this was the Son of God”! Of course, this was a Christian profession of faith, pure and simple, and as such it corresponds to God the Father’s declaration at the Lord’s baptism: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” and at the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, when again the voice of the Father was heard: “This is My beloved Son.”

Therefore, brothers and sisters, this is what we must hold on to: Jesus, The Christ, is the Son of God and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As God He possesses all authority and might. We ourselves, who are nothing more than little ants crawling around on the surface of the earth, puffing ourselves up like giants, delude ourselves into thinking that we are in charge, that all might and power resides in *us*! As we know, this constantly gets us into trouble. We need to put all of the power, might and authority right back with God and not in ourselves. This, together with a child-like trust in Christ, is the primary message of this Gospel for us today.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.