

Lenten Reflection

Monday, March 7, 2016

By Sister Judy Connor, CDP



Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The royal official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “You may go; your son will live.” (John 47-50)

The persistence of the royal official is touching. When he asked Jesus to go with him to Capernaum he was desperate to save his son’s life. He must have felt even more distressed when Jesus suggested that he and the others present needed to see signs and wonders in order to believe. The official could have given up at this disappointing response on the part of Jesus, but he did not. He also did not endeavor to flatter Jesus into coming with him, nor did he rationalize or make excuses. Instead, he set aside any attempt at pretense and simply said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” It would seem impossible for anyone to see a person so helpless and vulnerable not be moved with compassion, least of all Jesus. And so his son was saved.

When it comes down to it, most of us prefer the role of benevolent giver to that of supplicant. We feel uncomfortable with the implicit power differential, and on top of that there’s the risk of rejection. Or we may decide that just *needing* something is not enough. We therefore justify ourselves by coming up with reasons why we *deserve* that for which we are asking. Sometimes, we avoid asking for things directly in favor of hinting at what we need or promising things in return, or we sweet-talk the potential giver as a means to our end.

Yet, in this gospel passage, Jesus shows us that His love makes all of that unnecessary. The official stood before Jesus and asked for what he needed without any attempt at justification, flattery, or even a promise that he would come to believe if Jesus granted his request. Nor did Jesus ask him for any of that. Here the Gospel lets us know that we too can go before Christ and state our needs plainly and directly. Jesus is the Benevolent Giver and we are the supplicants, but the infinite love of Jesus frees us from playing any of the games we so often play with each other. Today I pray that we can each be that same loving face of Christ to one another.