

## Monday 2 December

Today is Monday, the 2 December, in the First Week of Advent.

The King's Singers sing *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis. 'I have never put my hope in any other but in you'. As I begin this time of prayer today, can I speak those words to God? Can I place all my hope, all my trust, all my faith in him?

We have just begun the religious season of Advent. It is a season of hope and expectation as we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus Christ and look forward to his Second Coming. We can sense this hope and expectation in today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Neither religion nor the desire for God brings the centurion to Jesus; it is the need and suffering of another that compels him to seek out Jesus. His is an attitude of unlimited trust. Jesus is a person who can be trusted and he will not turn away those who go to him to tell him their problems. What is my image of Jesus?

Jesus' reaction is immediate: 'I will come and cure him.' This answer surprises the centurion; it is so generous, beyond his expectations. He did not expect that Jesus would go to his house. He feels unworthy and expresses his faith in Jesus saying 'only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.'

Try to imagine the scene. The sense of hope and expectation as Jesus returns to Capernaum. Picture, if you can, the centurion. He is a pagan, a foreigner, an outsider. A soldier of the Roman army which dominated and exploited the people. We hear that the centurion came to Jesus. What brought him? Listen again to what the centurion asks Jesus to do. What does Jesus say about the centurion?

The centurion does not ask for anything. He simply tells Jesus that his servant is sick and suffering terribly. He believes that the word of Jesus can heal. Jesus is surprised, astonished and praises the faith of the centurion. The centurion shows us that faith consists in believing and trusting in the word of Jesus. From where does he get such faith? I place myself in the place of the centurion: what is there in my experience that leads me to believe in Jesus?

O Wisdom, Lord and Ruler, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Rising Sun, King of the nations, Emmanuel, Come, Lord Jesus.