Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (John 4:48).

Is 65:17-21; Jn 4:43-54

The royal official from Capernaum gains Jesus' ear as much as the blind man on the road or the lepers. Desperation reduces us all at the threshold of faith. A sick child moves the official to seek out a Galilean preacher already touched by suspicion and controversy, certainly for King Herod Antipas, who had beheaded John the Baptist. So there was risk for the royal official when he consorted with Jesus, but he loved his son more than any risk to his career.

Jesus, fresh from other miracles, including the changing of water into wine in nearby Cana, had a reputation for signs and wonders. He will demonstrate his power to heal from a distance, giving in to the man's plea and sending him home to discover that the fever broke at the very hour Jesus reassured him his son would live.

Yet Jesus first says to the man and to everyone, "Your faith requires signs and wonders." It is hardly faith if it is unwilling to leap unless a bridge is there. The royal official is on his way toward faith, step by step, entrusting his hope in Jesus' word. All the way home he deepens his belief, and this becomes part of an even greater miracle. HIs child is alive, but his whole household professes faith in Jesus and will receive eternal life.

Our Lenten journey is likewise a step-by-step prayer for faith. Lent uncovers our need for God, our hunger and thirst for holiness, and it exposes our weaknesses and lack of faith. So, we must pray more, "Lord, increase my faith." By the time we reach Jerusalem and Holy Week, Jesus will disappear into the apparent tragedy of a brutal death, the failure of his movement, the scattering of his followers. Only if we have faith will we see the resurrection, find life in the midst of death, become the disciples who are charged to carry the story forward into a skeptical world.

Now is the time to seek Jesus out and ask him for healing, sight, courage and, most of all, for more faith.

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