

"Never have I seen such faith"

As many of you know we've been in Texas the past nine days taking care of our granddaughter Elliott while her parents have taken a long needed vacation. The day we arrived in Austin we were told that Elliott was running a fever...they took her to the doctor the next morning the day before they were to leave, and found out it was merely a virus and that it would be Okay for James and Corey to take their long awaited trip...that gave all of us pause. We decided just to trust what was to come next.

The next morning early we dropped James and Corey off at the airport...they insisted that Elliott go with us...Katharine and I thought that might not be such a good idea...but we complied....after a long goodbye...we pulled out of the United airport drop off and Elliott, still running a temperature, burst into tears and cried in a loud voice... MAMA...Oh my God I said (or words to that effect), panic rising...how are we going to get through this....I'd forgotten everything I'd learned some 25+ years ago about taking care of a toddler...then I decided we had no choice but to trust...we would just trust...and it of course didn't hurt knowing that Katharine would be the primary care giver here...yes indeed I thought, my courage building, I'll trust the way ahead, because I knew....even if a room full of ninjas appeared, I knew Katharine could handle it. So I mostly made myself of use...taking out garbage...cooking....going to the grocery store...taking periwinkle the dog out for her walks....I was sort of like the soldiers and slaves of the centurion...who when he says come they come...and when he says go they go...trusting all the while the gracious way we are on.

Our brief story in Luke this morning is a snapshot story about faith... the Greek word for faith, pistos, can equally be translated trust...And I think that is what Luke has in mind in this story....trust, trust, an easy thing to do when there are no challenges about, but quite another matter when the order of things run askew...in our case taking care of a sick sixteen month old in Austin for a week...and in the centurion's case, the possibility of losing a valued and obviously loved slave....the world of challenge and change calls us to the quick...out of the torpor of ordered existence, or the illusion of ordered existence...calls us to our true selves...our true selves who know to trust when it matters.... that all manner of thing ultimately will be well. That first morning we weren't so sure.

Another observation in our keeping Elliott was her unreserved trust of us...she screamed Mama once...(from whom she has never been apart) and then she seemed to just know things would be fine...she called Katharine and me by our Elliott given names, Bobo, and Kite...and since then she has been perfectly adjusted...her fever gone...all manner of thing well....the power of trust...trust which sinks its roots not into one solitary breast...but sinks its roots deep into loving community...the centurion doesn't just cite his own trust in Jesus, but he enlists the trust of others as well...even the Jewish leadership...and the other side of the coin of course is that Jesus trusts the centurion, a centurion, one of the powers that be, who works for Rome, the very empire itself against whom Jesus has preached and derided time and again.

This is a snapshot onto the way God's commonweal is ordered, unlike what passes for the usual world order. What begins this unlikely circle of trust is Love, love prompted by the centurion's genuine humility...the centurion's love for his slave...and he is emboldened to trust this healer Jesus as last resort, knowing deep down that such love and trust sets the mystical process of healing in motion....remember, the centurion is taking great risk even approaching this controversial Jesus whom many call an enemy of Rome.

No this is a day in the life of the commonweal of God for Luke....a day in which love engenders trust...and such trust, such faith breaks all boundaries...in this case between Jew and Roman....but of course you remember there are other such stories in Luke...stories about how love and trust engender God's healing grace...the Syro-phoenician, the Phoenicians the bitter ancient enemies of Israel... the Syro-phoenician woman's daughter healed...the Samaritan (Samaritans hated by the Jews) the Samaritan taking care of an assaulted and wounded Jew, tending to his healing...all stories of love begetting trust and trust begetting healing....and in the midst of these commonweal moments: the begetting of reconciliation...reconciliation which unabashedly breaks boundaries.

Would that we love so much as to trust...genuinely trust the good road that draws us on...may Elliott learn the dynamic, the mystery of the commonweal that in a community of love and trust, there is always healing and reconciliation...would that the powers that be in our own day, muster the humility to love and therefore trust, like the

centurion who casts aside his pride for the sake of another...would that we as the human community look to the love that lives brimful among us and begin learning the art of trust that breaks all boundaries that separate us, neighbor from neighbor, people of color from people not so much so, religious sects, nation from nation...love and trust which will plant the hardy seeds of healing and reconciliation.

The first and most difficult step is humility.... recognizing and owning that we are all equals in God's gracious order....and then comes love and trust....and healing and reconciliation....so seemingly distant these days....but oh so close...and oh so possible....may one day soon would that we cry out... "Never have we seen such faith"and most of all...what such faith can do.