

Enter under my roof?

Why do we quote the centurion?

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

How is that better than praying, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you...”?

By the time we reach this moment in the liturgy, if we consciously and actively participated in the previous parts of the Mass, we have gone through a process of restoring our unity to Christ. We have acknowledged our need, and Christ has responded with grace. However, this experience is incomplete if we intend it only for our own benefit.

Mass ends with a final blessing followed by a hymn that the community sings together as a glorious pronouncement of our unity with each other and with God. In the blessing, the priest (or deacon) can choose from four options; two of them are a direct command to GO and be the Jesus we have received in the Eucharist: “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” Or: “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”

The first and foremost place where we go is into our homes. From there, we go out to our workplaces, schools, stores, recreational activities, etc. Wherever we encounter others, we are supposed to spread the presence of Christ. This is what it means to be a true Christian.

We announce the Gospel and we publicly glorify the Lord primarily by the way we live our lives. We take Jesus out into the world, which so desperately needs a Savior, by treating others the way he wants to treat them, ministering



to them the way he wants to help them, speaking what he wants to say, caring the way he cares.

To be successful at this, just prior to receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, we make one final prayer for help.

It's not enough to say, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” He heals. We receive. We are done. We go home and start arguing with the spouse or we watch an immoral television show or we complain about the neighbor who is too ill to mow his lawn.

The Catholic who truly participates in Mass wants to take Jesus home. However, we are not worthy of such an honor, since we often behave embarrassingly unlike Christ in our homes. So we acknowledge this in our final prayer before getting into the communion line – “I am not worthy to have you come under my roof” – and we ask Jesus to heal our souls so that we can take him home with us and keep his presence alive in our homes.

Of course Jesus says the word of healing that gives us our soul unity with his Spirit: “Yes!”

And then what? We go home with a holy soul. We enter under our roofs with Jesus. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we grow stronger in maintaining that holiness despite temptations and hardships and the unChrist-like ways that others treat us.

And when this help weakens and we start losing our unity with Christ? We go back to Mass and start the process of healing all over again.

How wonderful when daily Mass is available!