



19. February 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 2: 'In the School of Prayer'

After passing through the door of Ash Wednesday, today's traditional liturgy presents us with a story from the prophet Isaiah. He was sent to deliver sad news to King Hezekiah, who was terminally ill: *"Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover."* (Is 38:1b).

The king was deeply moved by this message, for he was clearly not yet ready to die. Perhaps he remembered the promise of a long and happy life for those who kept the covenant. His pain must have been even greater when he realized that he would die without leaving an heir to the throne. The story continues:

"Hezeki'ah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in thy sight.' And Hezeki'ah wept bitterly." (vv. 2–3).

In his anguish, the king pleaded with God, having a clear conscience. He was confident in the sincerity of his relationship with God, for he had lived doing what was pleasing in His sight, and so he was able to express this in his prayer. What he said was evidently true because God did not rebuke him as if he had made a false claim and lived in self-deception. On the contrary, his plea received a comforting response from God:

"Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: 'Go and say to Hezeki'ah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city.' (vv. 4–6).

God heard the king's supplicatory prayer. It was a prayer from a sincere heart that, having lived according to the Lord's will, had the courage to speak thus to its Creator. Blessed is he who can address the Heavenly Father in this way, without justifying himself. This must be the great difference between him and the Pharisees of the New Testament, whom Jesus reproaches as "hypocrites."

How can we describe this form of prayer? Perhaps as a humble prayer with a clear conscience? It is not a demand or a "right" that Hezekiah claims in exchange for his righteous conduct, but the beautiful and moving prayer of a king. If we try

wholeheartedly to live before God and do what is right in His eyes, we too can confidently adopt this way of praying. In the New Testament, we find St. Paul, who, with a clear conscience for having lived a life pleasing to God, prepares for death and can affirm:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Tim 4:7 - 8).

Blessed is he who can enter eternity in this way!

Today's Gospel offers another wonderful example of prayer accompanied by great faith (Mt 8:5-13). A Roman centurion comes to Jesus and asks him to heal one of his servants, who was paralyzed and in great pain. Jesus assures the centurion that he will go and heal him. In this Roman centurion, the Lord finds an attitude of humility and, at the same time, a firm faith, for he says to Him, *"Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."* (Mt 8:8)

Jesus marvels at the centurion's great faith and says to those following Him: *"Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven"* (vv. 10-11). Through these words, Jesus announced that many pagans would enter the Kingdom of God.

The wonderful words of the Roman centurion have been adopted into the Church's holy liturgy, albeit with slight modifications. In the traditional rite, just before receiving Holy Communion, we confess three times: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

And how true this is! With the centurion's humility, we can recognize that we are not worthy to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. However, his faith assures us that a single word from God is enough to heal us.

What can we learn from today's encounter with King Hezekiah and the centurion in Capernaum for our journey toward Easter?

The examples of King Hezekiah and the Apostle Paul should encourage us to direct our supplications and petitions to the Lord in a spirit of intimate friendship with Him.

Despite our weaknesses and mistakes, if we sincerely walk the path in pursuit of Christ, then we are friends of God and can appeal to this friendship.

Looking at the centurion, we see that humility can go hand in hand with a faith so strong that it surprises even the Lord.

And when we look to the Lord, we see the love of God who wants to heal people and treats them with great wisdom.

Therefore, **the flower of today's meditation** is to offer our supplications and petitions to the Lord with humility, friendship, and great faith.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/choosing-life-is-choosing-god/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/prayer-fasting-and-almsgiving-2/>