

MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Devotional Notes

November 2012

Theme: Following in Christ's Footprints

I've just returned from a fortnight's holiday in the Algarve. Sr Christine Butcher and her husband Charles from Gomersal were on the same plane going out, and also stayed in the same hotel during my second week. The town of Tavira was cut in two by a lovely river and it was good to amble alongside this and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the lovely old town. On our last Sunday we had a wonderful boat trip up the Gardiana River, which separates Portugal from Spain and, after we had sailed under the international bridge linking the two countries, we had the river to ourselves, apart from a few birds which flew over from time to time. We stopped for lunch at a rather deserted small village where we had a lovely lunch and were entertained during the courses by the accordion and other instruments. The following day we enjoyed another river trip out from Tavira on yet another glorious afternoon, when we could enjoy looking at the bird life and exploring the various river systems amongst the islands, once again more or less to ourselves.

Jesus spent a lot of his ministry around the waters of Lake Galilee, but his was a rather different experience from ours. He was constantly mobbed by crowds anxious to hear him speak, longing for him to work miracles for them or their friends, or just interested to see what he would do. He was always under the spotlight and would not have had much time to relax and enjoy the surroundings of the lake, or the peace and quiet we often wish to find when we visit the sea, lakes or rivers. For a time he lived at Capernaum on the northern shore of Lake Galilee, but in the passage we are going to look at it appears that he was just visiting. **Please read Luke 7:1-10.**

The Jewish people hated the Roman occupiers of their country and were very anxious to be rid of them, and especially occupying forces were especially despised. Yet here we have a Roman centurion who has friendly relations with the Jewish elders in Capernaum. He was someone who had tried to help the local community and understand its people and their needs, which is unusual as the Romans in general found it very difficult to understand either the Jews or their religion. Not only do we find this particular centurion caring about the local people, but he shows great concern also for his slave, again rather unusual.

In this incident, there are three things which Jesus and the centurion share. Firstly there is an understanding about authority: the centurion is a man of authority over his soldiers, but also under the authority of his superior officers, and recognises that Jesus derives his authority from God in order to teach, heal and perform miracles to help other people in the way he does. Secondly they both have a great care and concern for people, ordinary people, even people on the fringes, despised and rejected by others, yet welcomed, helped and cared for by both the centurion and Jesus. Thirdly, Jesus mentions the faith of this man, who is not part of the Jewish faith community, but yet shows greater faith in God and Jesus than most of those who are. Here was a man who was not just following in Christ's footprints, but walking beside him in authority, care and faith, yet doing so with great humility, feeling himself unworthy to receive Jesus into his home.

Hilary Smith

1. How do you react when the time you have allotted for peace and quiet or relaxation are disturbed by others wanting your help or advice?
2. Perhaps you might like to think about the three aspects of this incident: authority with humility, care and faith, and whether others can see in us these qualities demonstrated by Jesus and the centurion.