

Imaginative Contemplation – Calming the Storm



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Introduction

The most frequent way of praying that Saint Ignatius uses is that of imagining ourselves in a Gospel scene. We imagine ourselves as a character in the story. We take part in the story, seeing Jesus and all the other people, being aware of what's going on and how we are feeling. The purpose of praying with the imagination is to allow Christ in the Scripture to speak to us. To bring the Gospel stories to life for us. We are not trying to recreate history. It doesn't matter if your imagination takes the story off in a different direction to the Scripture. It doesn't matter if the story takes place in 1st century Palestine or where we live now in the 21st century. What is important is what God wants to say to us through this passage.

Let us sit and relax so that together we can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

We acknowledge we are in the presence of God so let us say together:

Direct O Lord and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer: all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings; my hopes and desires; may all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in your Spirit.
Amen

Let the Spirit enter your hearts and enlighten our minds as we push the boat out into unknown waters. Let the Spirit be with you so that you do not take our eyes off Jesus amidst the storms of your life. Ask the Spirit to help you see that Jesus is not only in the security of our boat but also in the storms that surround it.

Reading Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a headwind.

In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

It was Peter who answered. "Lord," he said, "if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." "Come," said Jesus.

Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. "Lord! Save me!" he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. "Man of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, "Truly, you are the Son of God"

Contemplation

Today's Gospel is a continuation of last week's Gospel, the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus has sent away the crowds and now he sends his apostles away in the boat so that he now can go away by himself and pray. He needed time by himself so that he could be one with the Father and grieve for John the Baptist who has been beheaded by Herod. As we

enter the scene, let the Spirit enter our hearts, so that we can be like Jesus, putting our trust in God amidst the turmoil of our life.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples if so which one? Peter? Perhaps someone not mentioned in the story. Perhaps you are yourself.
- What kind of evening is it? Hot? Cold? Clammy? Is there a breeze to warn you of the gathering storm clouds? Do you suspect that a storm may be brewing?
- As you row towards the opposite shore, do you watch Jesus dismissing the crowds? Are you annoyed with Jesus because he sent you off in the boat? Do you go reluctantly? Do you want to stay with Jesus because you had been part of Jesus' miracle and you feel important? Or do you understand that Jesus needs time by himself to perhaps pray, renew his strength after healing and feeding five thousand people? Do you have compassion for him knowing he needs time to grieve for John the Baptist?
- When you are in the boat, are you grumbling amongst yourselves because Jesus has gone off alone? Do you feel abandoned by him? What happens when the storm comes? Are you afraid because you can't seem to battle against the wind? Do you feel out of control? Do you blame Jesus, thinking that if he was there, this would not have happened? Do you think that Jesus would know what to do? Have you come to rely on Jesus to get you out of turbulent situations? Did you really think that although Jesus went off by himself to pray, he had taken his eyes off you?
- Who do you think is coming towards you, walking on water amidst the storm? Whose ghost do you think it is? Are you even more afraid? What are you feeling?
- When the voice says "Courage. Do not be afraid. It is I" Do you realise it is the voice of Jesus? Do you hear his calm voice amidst the turbulence of the waves? Do you feel reassured? Does the voice give you courage?
- What do you make of Peter saying "If it is you, lord tell me to come to you?" Do you think that it is typical of Peter? Do you think Peter is looking for the reassurance that it is actually Jesus walking towards you? When Jesus said "Come" are you afraid for Peter as you watch him walking on water to Jesus or do you wish you had Peter's courage to step out of the boat where you feel more secure and walk out into the storm towards Jesus?
- If you are Peter, what happens inside you when Jesus says "Come" and you step out of the boat to walk across the water to Jesus? Did you feel courageous, that nothing could stop you?

What does it feel like to walk on water and not sink? Do you feel that as Jesus is with you, nothing could harm you? Why do you begin to sink? Is it because you begin to doubt? Is it because of the waves and the wind? Do you suddenly feel you cannot battle against the wind? Is it because you take your eyes off Jesus? Is your fear too much in this hostile environment? What does Jesus do when you call on him to save you?

- When Jesus put his hand out to steady you, to support you, how did you feel? Do you feel secure knowing that Jesus is not in the boat but in the midst of the storm? Do you feel that in order to go out to meet him, you must leave the security of the boat in spite of the dangers? Do you feel that all you need is trust in Jesus' helping hand and faith in God's love for us?
- Jesus and Peter walk back to the boat together, the storm abates and peace ensues. What is going on in your mind? Do you too bow down before Jesus saying "Truly, you are the Son of God". How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus is the Son of God?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart. Ask him to help you have faith in him to leave the security of the boat and go out into the storm to find him there and to trust that he will be there to give you a helping hand.

Sharing

Let us now share what we thought, felt etc. only if you are comfortable to do so.

End Prayer Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd