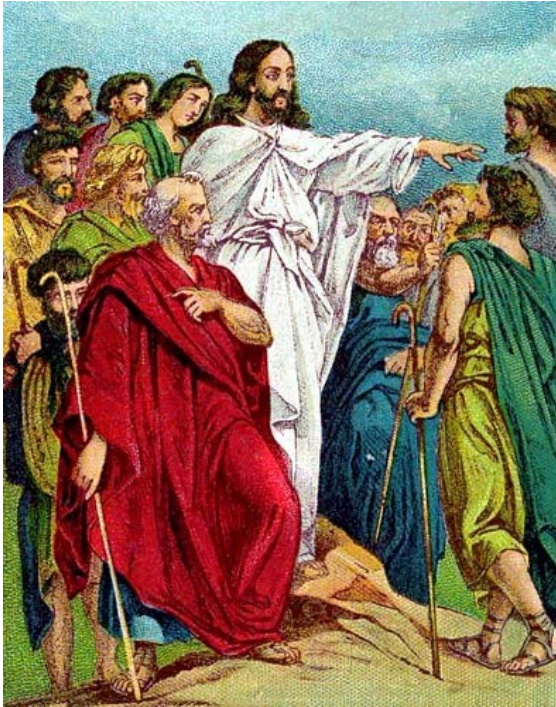


Imaginative Contemplation – Get Behind me Satan



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 our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we can reflect on who Jesus is for me and what I must do to be one of his disciples.

Reading Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.

Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. "Heaven preserve you, Lord," he said. "This must not happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?"

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour."

Contemplation

Let us start our contemplation by setting the scene. This week's Gospel is a continuation of that of last week where Peter acknowledges that Jesus, their friend and teacher is the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah. Jesus, in return bestows on Peter the keys of the kingdom and on him will be built the Church Community. We enter the scene in which Jesus confides in the twelve the outcome of his ministry. Let the Spirit enter our hearts and minds as we listen to Jesus revealing to us what the consequences are of being his disciple.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? If so, which one? A passer-by? Something who is not mentioned in the passage?
- What kind of day is it? Hot? Cold? Clammy?
- Are you still sitting or have you moved on from Caesarea Philippi?
- Are you excited at Peter's revelation that Jesus is the Messiah?
- What are your expectations of the Messiah? Political? Military leader? Something else? As Jesus' followers what are your expectations? Do you think you will have a share of the honour and privileges that goes with being one of the Messiah's disciples?
- Are you brought down to earth when Jesus, the Son of God, tells you he is destined to be put to death by the chief priests and scribes? What do you understand by him saying he will be raised up on the third day? Or are you still shocked by his disclosure that he is going to die? How do you feel?
- If you are Peter, what makes you take Jesus aside to challenge what he says? Are you feeling important because of the authority that has been given to you? Do you feel you can talk to Jesus on equal terms? Do you say what you do because you love Jesus? Because you do not want anything to happen to your friend?
- How do you feel when he says to you "Get behind me Satan"? Upset? Confused? Do you realise that the way you think is not God's way of thinking? How do you feel that one minute you are the rock on which the Church will be built and now you are the rock which is an obstacle in the path of Jesus' mission? That one minute you had been given a revelation by God and now you are thinking in human terms? What is going on in your mind? Do you feel a failure?
- If you are one of the other disciples or an onlooker, what do you think is happening between Peter and Jesus? Why do you think Peter has taken Jesus aside? What do you think they are saying to one another? Do you feel left out? What is the look on Jesus' face? What about the look on Peter's face?
- When Jesus turns and says to you, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.....". What is he asking you to do? What do you think he means? What is this cross he is asking you to bear? Do you think he is asking you to lead a miserable life? Or do you think he is asking you to look at life in a different way? That life is not all about honour and privileges? Could he be asking you to give up something so that you can live life more fully? Is Jesus' words revealing to you that he is the Messiah but in a different way to

what you envisaged? Are you open to seeing the Messiah in a new way? Are you disappointed by this revelation? Afraid? Dispirited? Excited? Do you want Jesus to explain more fully what he means?

- Are you willing to walk the way of Jesus and bear a cross? Are you willing to exchange your life so that you can find a life in God?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart as you contemplate what being his disciple means and the cross you may bear?

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