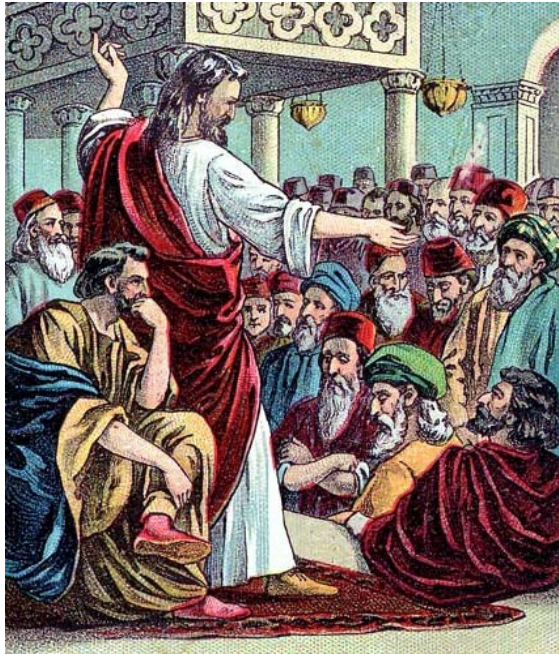


## Imaginative Contemplation – Parable of the two sons



### 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 our promises will not be empty, our words not meaningless and that our actions will bear fruit.

## **Reading      Matthew 21:28-32**

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, 'My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not go,' but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, 'Certainly, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?" "The first," they said.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him."

## **Contemplation**

Let us start our contemplation by setting the scene. Prior to Jesus telling this parable, the religious leaders demanded to know Jesus' authority for preaching and acting in the way he did. He had just expelled the traders from the temple and had laid claim to it calling it "My Father's House". The religious leaders were angry. So let us enter the scene as we listen to Jesus telling those religious leaders the what kind of people will enter the Kingdom of Heaven..

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the religious leaders? Someone who had come to pray in the temple? Someone hoping to be cured? Someone who is not mentioned in the passage?
- Why have you come to the temple? To be with Jesus? To pray? To listen to Jesus? To be healed? To watch to confrontation between Jesus and the chief priests and elders?

- Is the temple crowded? Look around you. Who is there? What is the atmosphere like? Is it noisy? Hostile? Prayerful? What is Jesus' mood? Is he angry? Calm? Prayerful?
- What is going through your mind as you listen to this parable about the two brothers being asked to go into the vineyard? Which of the brothers do you relate to?
- Have you ever been in the situation of the first brother? Been asked to do something and refused? Did you say you wouldn't do it because you were annoyed at being asked? Perhaps you couldn't be bothered; you had been taken out of your comfort zone; you were afraid, tired, angry. Had you made other plans for the day and then had to change them? Did you then feel guilty and then relent realising that you had been unreasonable and uncooperative? Did you realise that helping that person was more important than your own plans?
- Have you ever been in the situation of the second brother? Been asked to do something, said you would do it and then not do it? Was it because you were too afraid to tell the person you had something else planned? Were you in the habit of making promises and not keeping them? Did you want to sound co-operative even though you had no intentions of doing so? Did you feel you would not be able to carry out the task and were afraid to say so?
- Has someone ever promised you something and then let you down? Has someone ever refused you and then changed their minds? What Jesus is asking us is if our words and deeds are in agreement with each other.
- What is going through your mind as you continue listening to Jesus? Are you one of those people who thinks you are following in the ways of God; who thought John the baptist was eccentric and mad? Do you also think that Jesus is mad and eccentric? Or did you think John the Baptist was a righteous man who spoke the truth and was moved by his preaching? Do you think because you regularly attend the temple you are in a privileged position? Or do you go to the temple to pray for forgiveness because you know you are a sinner?
- Do you feel enraged when Jesus tells you that tax collectors and prostitutes will make their way to heaven before you? Or are you comforted that no matter how far you stray from God, you will always be welcomed back?
- Is this passage for you one of outrage because you feel you have been keeping God's Law and those whom you have judged to be on the margins of society will get to the Kingdom of God before you

do? Or one of God's mercy and compassion and you are thankful that he welcomes those who repent?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart.

## **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