

Imaginative Contemplation – Parable of the Wedding Feast



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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 our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we can hear God's invitation to his feast and respond positively with enthusiasm.

Reading Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come.

Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them.

The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding".

So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth".

For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Contemplation

In today's reading, Jesus is still addressing the religious leaders who are stubbornly refusing to accept Jesus as the Messiah. In this reading, he compares the Kingdom of heaven to a wedding banquet for the King's son (Jesus) with the invitations being sent out by the king himself (God) to his chosen people by his servants (the prophets and disciples). Jesus speaks this parable because he notices that he was being rejected by his own people. So let us enter the scene as we listen to Jesus continuing to try and turn the hearts and minds of the stubborn religious leaders.

- 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 coming to hear Jesus? 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? Had you heard about Jesus and were curious?
- 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? Frustrated?
- What is going through your mind as you listen to this parable? Do you feel sorry for the king whose invited guests refuse to come to the banquet? Do you wonder why they were making excuses since the banquet was a grand one? Why do you think these chosen people do not want to come to the feast? Can you see that the generous king spared no expense on his chosen guests? Can you see that the king goes to the ends of the earth to invite guests to partake in his banquet after his chosen guests refuse to come?
- How do you feel about the person who has turned up without wearing a wedding robe? Do you feel sorry for him? Or do you think that he was rude because he did not make any effort to dress nicely for the wedding? Would you turn up to a feast without being prepared? Do you think it is important to prepare your mind and heart for your encounter with God? To be living out his Gospel message as a preparation for the feast? A true committed to say yes to his message?
- How do you prepare yourself for God's invitation? What do you do to prepare for this rich banquet that God, our Father is inviting us to? Are you taking his invitation seriously? Enthusiastically? Casually? Are you making excuses not to go?
- How do you feel as you listen to Jesus telling us that God's invitation is open to everyone? To saints and sinners alike? That we have all been called and have been given the choice to accept

the invitation or refuse it? Do you wonder at God's goodness and mercy to all? Are you grateful for his generosity? Are you filled with joy that no matter how far you have strayed God is calling you back to participate fully in his banquet?

Is there anything you want to say to Jesus about his Father's invitation? Do you want to ask him how to better prepare yourself? Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your heart and mind during this time of prayer and silence.

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