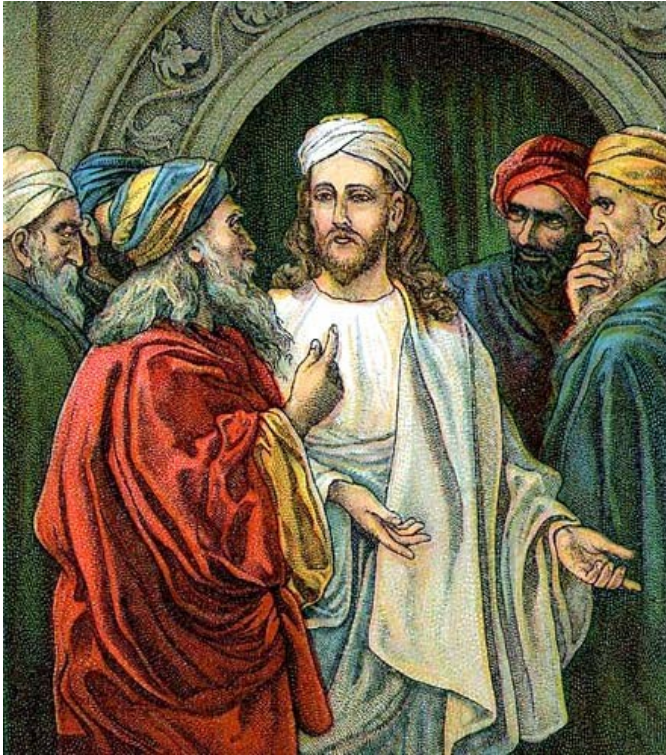


## Imaginative Contemplation – The Greatest Commandment



### 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 to contemplate the importance of love in our lives; the love of God and the love of our neighbour. Let us pray for a truly loving heart.

## Reading      **Matthew 22:34 – 40**

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?'

Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

## Contemplation

In today's Gospel, we see the continuing confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. The Pharisees who were gloating that the Sadducees had just been silenced over their disbelief of life after death now came to Jesus with their own challenge of which is the greatest of all the commandments. So let us enter the scene and listen to how Jesus answers the Pharisees.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the Pharisees? One of the Sadducees? Someone following Jesus? Someone who is not mentioned in the passage?
- Where does this confrontation take place? In the Temple? In the market place? Just walking along the street?
- Why are you there? Are you with Jesus? Are you just passing by? Is the area busy? Quiet? What are people doing? Has a crowd gathered to listen to the confrontations between Jesus and the different religious leaders?

- What was going through your mind when you saw the Pharisees approaching Jesus? Did you immediately think that there was going to be trouble? Were you wondering what the Pharisees were going to say to Jesus? Were you there when Jesus was challenged about paying taxes to Caesar and the afterlife? Were you curious to hear what Jesus would say to the Pharisees after hearing him deal efficiently with his previous questioning and leaving those interrogators with no reply?
- When they asked him 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?', did you think it was a fair question because you too had wondered which out of the six hundred or so Laws was the greatest? Was this a question that you had pondered or discussed with your friends and family? Were you grateful to the Pharisees for asking the question?
- Were you surprised when Jesus answered not using his own words but by quoting directly from the Law itself? 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind' from Deuteronomy and "You must love your neighbour as yourself" from Leviticus. Did you notice that both these commandments have the word "love" in them?
- Jesus then went on to tell the Pharisees "On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.' What went through your mind when you heard that? Were you relieved because it meant that by truly loving God and truly loving your neighbour that the rest of the Law would take care of itself? Did it take much of the burden of the Law off your shoulders.? Did it make you realise that no loving act can be against the Law? Did it make you realise that you had been worrying unnecessarily about aspects of the Law?
- Do you see that loving God and loving neighbour are complementary and inseparable in that God's love shines through us and flows out to our community? Do you see that God created us out of love and that confirmation of our love for God requires love of our neighbour?
- How will loving God with all your heart soul and mind change your pattern of lifestyle? Have you ever thought that God lives in your neighbour so loving your neighbour is also loving God?

Is there anything you want to say to Jesus about this great commandment of love? Is there anything you want to ask him about loving God and loving your neighbour.

## **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