

## Imaginative Contemplation – The Last Judgement



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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 ask for the grace to be a loving person filled with care and compassion for all those we meet and to serve the King using the abundant talents he bestowed on us.

## Reading      **Matthew 25:31-46**

Jesus said to his disciples "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. " For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me".

Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me."

Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your

help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me". And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life."

## Contemplation

In Matthew Chapter 25, a chapter that deals with the end-times, we started off by reflecting on the parable of the bridesmaids and the consequence of not being ready to meet our creator. This was followed by the parable of the talents and consequences of using or not using our God-given talents to their full potential. The last part of this chapter is an imaginary encounter with our creator of our final day when we will be given an account of the way we lived our lives. So let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus describing what will happen when we meet God.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the crowd? A follower of Jesus? Someone who is not mentioned in the passage?
- Where is Jesus talking? In the temple? In an open space? In the market place?
- Is there a crowd of people around Jesus? If so where are you in the crowd? In the front? Middle? On the margins?
- When Jesus starts his discourse on the final Judgement, what is the atmosphere like? Is it full with suspense? Fear? Anticipation? How do you feel?
- Have you noticed that Jesus starts his discourse separating the sheep from the goats? Does this remind you of other parables you have heard from Jesus e.g. the separation of the good crop from weeds; wheat from chaff; good fish from those to be thrown away?
- Have you noticed that Jesus is very clear regarding the difference between a sheep and a goat? The difference being how I have loved, how have I cared for others especially the poor, the needy and the marginalised. Are you surprised about this?
- Are you surprised that the criteria of separating the sheep from the goats are not religious in nature?
- Are you surprised that the criteria are not at all to do with the keeping or breaking of the commandments?
- Are you surprised that people are condemned not for doing anything that is morally wrong but are condemned for what they have failed to do?
- Are you surprised that what is expected of you to be included in the sheep is simple i.e. to feed 'Jesus' in those who are hungry, to quench the thirst of 'Jesus' in those who are thirsty; to clothe

'Jesus' in those who are naked; to visit 'Jesus' in those who are sick and in jail? Did you realise that every time you take care of someone in need it is Jesus himself you are caring for?

- Are you surprised that Jesus message is so simple; that I will be judged on my love and service to others?
- Do I recognise the face of Jesus in others especially those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick or in prison? Or do the needs of others fail to affect my life?
- How does it make you feel that you are expected to go out of your way to help others? That you are expected to reach out in love to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison? That it doesn't matter how they got into that situation but you are expected to see Jesus in them?
- Does this picture of the Last Judgement fill you with fear and dread? Do you find it challenging?

Ask Jesus to help you look back over the last few days and recall the times when I have acted as He asked, and give thanks. Also ask Jesus to help recall times I have failed to act as He asks, and seek forgiveness. Ask Jesus to help you become one of his flock of sheep by becoming a loving, caring and tolerant person.

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