

Imaginative Contemplation – He Taught them with Authority



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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 the teaching and authority of Jesus can also make a deep impression on us so that we can be freer to serve him and can become his prophet.

Reading Mark 1:21-21

They went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In the synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit and it shouted, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God". But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.'

And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Contemplation

In last Sunday's Gospel, we saw Jesus calling his first disciples. Today's Gospel follows directly on from this in that we see Him beginning his ministry – a mission of healing and teaching. So let us enter the synagogue at the start of a busy day for Jesus to hear Him teaching the Good News and witness His first miracle.

- Who are you in the passage? Are you one of his first disciples? Are you someone in the synagogue? Are you a passer-by who overheard his teaching and wanted to hear more? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the passage?

- As you listen to Jesus, you look around. What do you notice? Is the atmosphere quiet as people concentrated on his words? What expressions do the listeners have on their faces?
- What about you? How is Jesus teaching making an impression on you? What is He saying that makes you think that His teaching is unlike that of the Scribes? Is it the way He is teaching, as opposed to the content of His teaching that impresses you? Does His teaching sound as though it is coming from His heart as opposed to His head? Is it the fact that His teaching is about His experience with God as opposed to the rules and regulations laid down by the Scribes? Do find yourself comparing Jesus' teaching to that of the Scribes? How does that make you feel?
- What do you do when the man with the unclean spirit enters the synagogue? How do you react? How do others react? What about Jesus? Are you surprised when the spirit says, "I know who you are: the Holy One of God?" Did you know as you were listening that Jesus was the "Holy One of God?" Did you recognise the Holy One of God? Are you surprised that Jesus' identity was revealed to you by an unclean spirit?
- Are you surprised that Jesus shows no fear of this spirit but calmly expels it leaving the man free? Do you marvel at Jesus' authority over the unclean spirit? What is going through your mind as you witness this?
- Do you too ask what this could all mean? Is there a murmur in the synagogue as the people try to understand what has just happened? Do you feel you have just witnessed two signs of the Good News, i.e. Jesus new way of teaching about God and his command over unclean spirits? That Jesus authority lies in not just what He says but also what He does?
- Do you feel that Jesus has opened a new door for you? Do you feel like the afflicted man, that you too have been set free from laws that you find difficult to understand?
- What do you do now that you have witnessed Jesus' healing and teaching? Are you one of those people who helped to spread Jesus' reputation throughout the countryside because you feel excited and liberated?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, let us ask Jesus to help us submit to His empowering authority and to listen to His teaching by immersing ourselves in his Gospel message so that we too can experience His healing and liberation in our lives.

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
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