

## Imaginative Contemplation – You are my Son, the Beloved

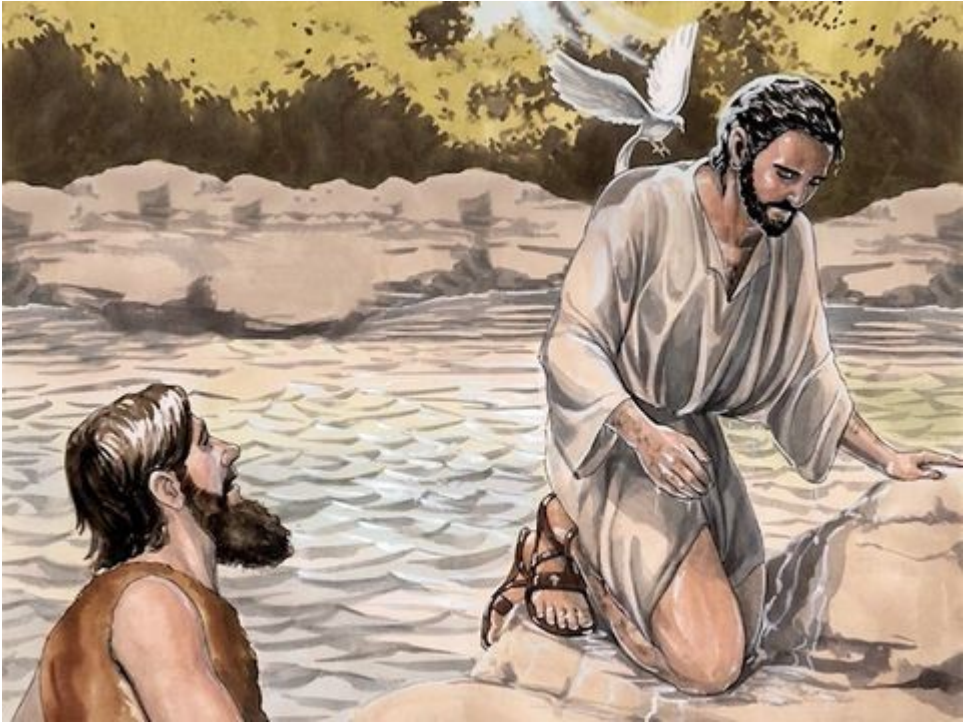


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### Introduction

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 too can emerge from the waters changed in the knowledge that that we, like Jesus, have been entrusted by God Our Father, to carry out a mission

## **Reading      Mark 1:7-11**

In the course of his preaching John said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John.

No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him.

And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

## **Contemplation**

Today's Feast, The Baptism of Our Lord, heralds the end of the of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It marks the transition from Jesus' hidden life to that of His public ministry. This feast also marks the third time Jesus' divinity has become apparent. The first time was when the Angels announced his birth to the shepherds, the second time was when His birth was revealed to the Magi by a star. With this in mind, let us too witness this revelation as we enter the scene at the Jordan.

- Who are you in the passage? One of John's disciples? Perhaps you are John himself? Perhaps someone who has come to be baptised? Perhaps you are an inanimate object like the water that people are being baptised in.
- Why have you come to the Jordan? Have you come alone? Come with a friend? Have you heard about John the Baptist and wanted

to hear him preach? Do you feel the need for cleansing? Do you want to be forgiven of your sins and be converted?

- What is the scene around you like? Are there lots of people listening to John? Is there an orderly queue waiting to be baptised? Is there anything unusual about today that makes John say 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals'? That John feels no less than a slave compared to the person who is following him? Do you look around to see if there is anyone who fits that description? Does John give you that feeling of expectancy?
- Are you watching John baptising people? Are you nervous? Do you expect to feel different when you emerge from the cleansing waters? Do you expect to feel new life as God's beloved child?
- You notice John in conversation with someone in the water. Do you wonder what they are saying to one another? Do you watch more closely?
- How do you feel when you see the "heavens being torn apart" when this man emerges from the water? Afraid? Dumb-struck? Do you want to run? Are you rooted to the spot?
- What about the dove? Do you see this as a connection between the waters and the work of God?
- Do you hear the voice coming from heaven saying, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you?' Do you realise that you have witnessed something heaven-sent? That you have witnessed the divinity of Jesus? That you have witnessed the Trinity in action? That through Jesus, God has opened a new way of communicating with us?
- Is there anything you want to ask Jesus? Perhaps why he, the Son of God needed to be baptised by John, a baptism of repentance? Since Jesus has nothing to repent, did you think this was strange? What do you think Jesus would tell you?
- Do you realise that Jesus' baptism was the way in which the Father introduced His Son and His Son's mission to the world? That on that day, Jesus' divinity was made manifest?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation speak to Jesus about your experience. Talk to him about your baptism, and how through it, you are being introduced to the world as a child of God and that the Spirit too will be there to guide you in your mission.

## **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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