

Third Sunday of Easter – Peace be with you



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.

Sit and relax by focussing on your breathing for a few minutes so that you can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

Acknowledge you are in the presence of God by saying the following prayer:

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 guide and enlighten our minds as we read the Gospel and reflect on what it means to have Jesus appear in our midst. Let the Spirit enter you so that you too can see and hear the risen Lord say "Peace be with you"..

Reading Luke 24:35-48

Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

They were still talking about all this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet.

Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.

Contemplation

On this, the third Sunday of Easter, we continue to hear Gospel accounts of Jesus' appearances to his disciples following his Resurrection. Today's reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke and follows immediately after the report of Jesus' appearance to his disciples on the road to Emmaus. So imagine the scene and find a place within it. With the help of the Spirit, let the story unfold in your imagination.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the disciples locked in the room for fear of the Jews? Are you one of the disciples who hurried back from Emmaus to recount how they met the risen Jesus? Are you someone not mentioned in the printed story?
- What time of day is it? What is the atmosphere in the room like? Is it crowded? Cramped? Stuffy?
- What about those present. Are you talking? Excited with the story of how the two disciples recognised the risen Jesus in the breaking of bread? If you are quiet, what are you thinking about? Are you trying to make sense of what you have just heard?
- How do you feel when in the midst of all this excitement, Jesus himself stands among you? Why are you afraid even though Jesus' first words are "Peace be with you"? Why do you think you are seeing a ghost? Why are you frightened and agitated? Do you not believe the Emmaus story?
- Jesus then consoles you by showing you he is not a ghost by inviting you to touch him. What is it like for you to be invited to touch his wounded hands, feet or side? Are you brave enough to go and touch him?
- When you see Jesus' wounds, do they convince you of his profound love for us? That it was a clear sign of the prophesy that he would suffer and die for us and rise on the third day?
- Does Jesus put you at your ease when he asks for something to eat? Does this bring a sense of normality into this incredible situation? Do you chat joyfully around the table as you come to the realisation that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead and is truly present in your midst? What do you chat about? Perhaps you tell him about your fear when he was arrested; your shame when you all deserted him;

your disbelief and horror when he was crucified; your anxiety in case you too would be arrested; your scepticism when Mary of Magdala told you the stone had been rolled away and that your tomb was empty. Tell Jesus what is going on in your heart.

- Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, do your hearts burn within you as Jesus opens your minds to the meaning of the Scriptures and the prophecies about him? Are your eyes opened when you realise the reason He came – repentance and forgiveness for all out of the love God has for his children?
- Do you feel privileged that despite everything, Jesus trusts you with this mission of being witnesses to his Resurrection and to preach the love and forgiveness of God to all nations? Do you feel up to the task since you have never left the district of Judea? Do you trust the Risen Christ to help you? What about his Blessed Mother, are you consoled by the fact that she will be present in your midst to bring courage and guidance?

Speak to Jesus about how you feel? Ask him for the grace to be open to experiences where God's unmistakable presence can be recognised. Ask God for the courage that despite your faults and failings, that you will be bold enough to bear witness to the Risen Christ.

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.