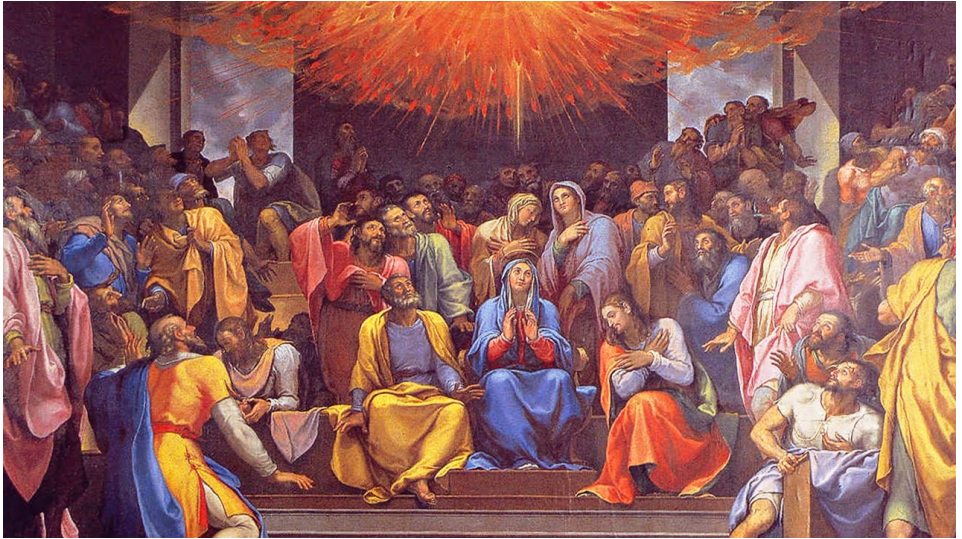


Imaginative Contemplation – Pentecost Sunday



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 enter our hearts and minds as we contemplate the versatility of the Spirit who bestows on us a variety of gifts with the ultimate aim that we should all work together to build the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Reading 1 Corinthians 12:3-7.12-13

No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose.

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ.

In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

Contemplation

On this Pentecost Sunday, the Feast of the birth of the Church, as we have already contemplated the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles as described in Acts 2:1-11 and Jesus appearing in the midst of his disciples as narrated in John's Gospel 20:19-23 (both reflections can be found on the Parish website) let us reflect on the variety of gifts the Spirit of God has bestowed on us as described by

St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. So put yourself in the scene imagine you are either reading this letter or it being read to you.

- Who are you in the scene? The person reading the letter? A person listening to the narrative?
- Are you an inhabitant of Corinth? Or perhaps someone passing through?
- Where is this letter being narrated? In the temple? In the open in a public place? Why are you there in that particular place at that particular time?
- Is there a crowd of people listening? What is the atmosphere like? What do you notice about those present. What do you notice about your surroundings?
- What is going through your mind when you hear “There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people”? Have you ever thought about your gifts and given thanks for them? Or are you too busy noticing the gifts and talents of others so you fail to see that you too have been generously endowed with bountiful gifts?
- Do you realise that you have been specifically chosen for your particular gifts? That your gifts are unique to you the same as other peoples gifts are unique to them? That they are given to you according to your unique character and abilities? That your particular gifts have been given to you because God has chosen you for a particular purpose?
- Did you ever consider that your gifts and those of others come from the same Source i.e. the Spirit of God? Does it make you realise that everyone is connected by the same Spirit? That by using your unique gifts, you are all working in a different way towards the same goal? Have you ever thought that men and women, slave and citizen, rich and poor are all connected by the same Spirit? Will that make you see others in a different light? In more equal terms?
- How does that make you feel? Grateful for your gifts? Do you feel you want to ponder the gifts you have and reflect on how best you could use them? Does it make you wonder how you can use your gifts for the good of the community? Do you feel your connectedness to the community, or the Church as Paul

describes? Do you feel part of that body and that the body, the Church, cannot function without you? Or do you wish you had different gifts because you don't feel the ones you have impress others or are admired by the community?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to these words of St Paul. Speak to Jesus about your gifts and how you should use them for the role God has chosen for you. Speak to him about the contribution you can make to the mission of the Church. Give thanks for your gifts.

Let us now spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation

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.