

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Love one another



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 my mind as we read the Gospel and reflect on the commandment Jesus has given us; to love one another.

Reading John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.

Remain in my love,

If you keep my commandments

you will remain in my love,

just as I have kept my Father's commandments

and remain in his love.

I have told you this

so that my own joy may be in you

and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment:

Love one another, as I have loved you.

A man can have no greater love

than to lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

I shall not call you servants any more,

because a servant does not know his master's business;

I call you friends, because I have made known to you

everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me, no, I chose you;

and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit,

fruit that will last;

and then the Father will give you

anything you ask him in my name.

What I command you is to love one another.”

Contemplation

On this, the Sixth Sunday of Easter, the Gospel Passage is a continuation of last week's Gospel passage and is from the long discourse which Jesus has with his disciples during the Last Supper. Last week Jesus tells us that he is the vine and we are the branches, and in the passage we learned that our union with Jesus will lead to fruitful service. This week, Jesus extends this teaching to describe the kind of service that Christians are called upon to offer to others, one of love which is at the heart of the Christian message. So with this in mind, let us enter the scene and find a place within it.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of his disciples? Perhaps a person that is not specifically mentioned in the printed story?
- What is the room like where you are listening to Jesus' discourse? Is it small? Large? Homely? Austere? Are you sitting? Standing? Are the chairs comfortable? Hard?
- What time of day is it? Morning? Noon? Evening?
- What is the atmosphere in the room like? Do you feel peaceful? Attentive? Argumentative? Confused? Tired?
- As you listen to Jesus telling us that he loves us as the Father loves him, how does that make you feel? Surprised? Contented? Joyful? Comforted? Do you feel God's unconditional love for you or do you doubt that you can be loved so absolutely? Do you feel that Jesus has put a restriction on his love for you because he has asked you to keep his Father's Commandments? Or do you think that by keeping the Commandments you will become more loving, more forgiving, more tolerant and more joyful because it means I am caring for the well-being of others?
- What is going through your mind when Jesus tells you that there no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends? Do you realise that you are being called to love others, good, bad and indifferent and that it may cost you your life? That you are being called to go that extra mile with and for others? Do you think it is a big ask? An unreasonable demand? Do you wonder how you can love your enemies and perhaps lay down your life for them? Do you realise that as Jesus is sharing this meal with you, this is exactly what he is about to do, lay down his life for you?

- How do you feel when Jesus calls you his friend, not servant? Does it make you feel loved and cherished? Does it change your relationship with him to one of intimacy? Do you feel his warmth, generosity, love and gentleness as he tells you this? Do you feel he is a perfect role model in how to be sensitive to the needs of others? Does it make you want to know about the sort of love that is unselfish, that is unearned, unconditional, one that looks for no return? Or would you rather not be committed to that type of friendship, that type of love?
- What feelings are going on inside you knowing that Jesus chose you; that Jesus commissioned you to go out and bear fruit? Proud that he has trust in you to accomplish his mission despite your faults and failings? Or do you feel it is a duty and a restriction rather than a path to joy and freedom?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus' words. Is there anything you want to ask him? Approach Jesus and talk to him about what is going on inside you. Give thanks for the love, friendship, generosity and compassion he has shown you.

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.