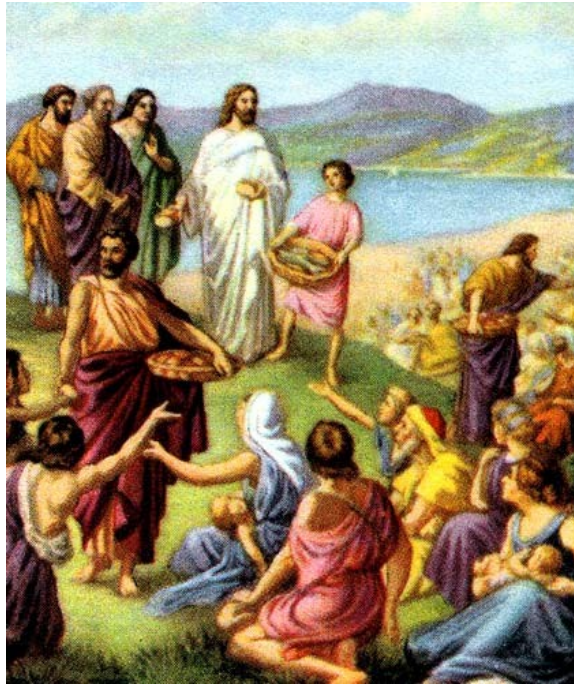


## Imaginative Contemplation – Five Loaves and Two Fish



### 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 so that we too can be touched by the generosity of Jesus in our poverty. Let us pray that, we, like Jesus are not overwhelmed by the many needs of people, but by his grace we are able to do what we can.

## **Reading      John 6:1-15**

Jesus went off to the other side of the Sea of Galilee - or of Tiberias - and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he gave by curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside, and sat down there with his disciples. It was shortly before the Jewish feast of Passover. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each'. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?' Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down'.

There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing gets wasted'. So they picked them up, and filled twelve hampers with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves.

The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, 'This really is the prophet who is to come into the world'. Jesus, who could see

they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself.

## **Contemplation**

Over the past few Sundays, we have seen in St Mark's Gospel, Jesus choosing his disciples and sending them on his mission to teach the Good News of salvation and to free people from their ailments. St Mark's Gospel continues with the multiplication of the loaves and fishes however, this Sunday we deviate from St Mark and turn to St John for the narration of this miracle which is recorded in all four Gospel. In St John's narrative, we experience not only the authority of Jesus but also his divinity. So with this in mind, let us enter the scene.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the apostles? One of the crowd? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- Notice what is going on around you. What is the mood like – of the crowd, of the apostles, of Jesus? Tired? Impatient? Compassionate?
- If you are one of the crowd, why are you there? Is it because of the signs Jesus has given and the miracles he has performed? Is it because you are impressed by his teaching and you want to hear more? Are you hungry in spirit?
- How does Phillip react when Jesus asks him about buying food for the crowd? Do you think Jesus asks Phillip because he may know the area and where to buy the food?
- How do you feel when a young boy offers Jesus his lunch of five barley loaves and two fishes? Do you laugh because you think how could this meagre offering go round everyone? Do you feel ashamed because this little boy stood out from the crowd to offer what he had? Do you see that this small offering given in love and sincerity has a huge effect? Have you ever thought of what effect your own small offerings given in love would have on the community? Or would you rather not risk being seen by others?
- You notice Jesus giving thanks for the bread and the fish. You watch Jesus giving out the food. Do you too hold up your hands for some? What is the look on Jesus' face as he hands

you food? How do you feel as you accept the food and start to eat with the others around you?

- How do you envisage this banquet? Do you see in Jesus his desire to share himself with you in his teaching and in the Bread of life? Do you see that through Jesus, God is revealing his feelings towards us; feelings of compassion, care and concern for our needs? Do you see that God's love for us is abundant and lavish in that there were twelve baskets of food leftover? Do you see that the leftover food was collected because God's gifts to us should not be wasted?
- Are you one of the people who having experienced this miracle, wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king? Or do you help him escape?

Feel what is going on inside you as you eat of this banquet. Talk to Jesus about his offering of himself to you in the form of bread. Give thanks to God for the Bread of life given to us through Jesus.

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.