

Imaginative Contemplation – He sent them out in pairs



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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.

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 hear Jesus' call to us to be his disciple. Let us pray that we put our trust in him so that we can have the courage to engage in the world around us.

Reading Mark 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff - no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses.

They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic'. And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.' So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Contemplation

Today's Gospel from St Mark, is a continuation from last weeks Gospel where we see Jesus being rejected by his own family and friends in his home town of Nazareth. Despite this rejection, Jesus prepares the closest of his disciples, the Twelve, to go out and preach to the surrounding towns and villages. Now, imagine you are one of these disciples. Listen to Jesus' instructions for these seemingly severe working conditions.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the chosen twelve? Perhaps you are someone or something not mentioned in the story.
- How do you feel about being sent off in pairs? Are you happy with the person you are going on the mission with? Would you have rathered gone with someone else?
- Why do you think Jesus has sent you in pairs? Do you think it is because he doesn't trust you to follow his instructions by yourself? Or is it more to do with finding strength and companionship from each other? More to do with Jesus not want us to go it alone?
- How do you feel about setting off without Jesus? Are you afraid and anxious because you have seen him being rejected and you too are afraid of being rejected? Do you wish he was coming with you to guide you? Do you feel inexperienced? Are you excited with the mission? Do you feel ready for the challenges that await you? Do you feel happy that he has entrusted you with this mission?
- How do you feel about being given authority of unclean spirits? Challenged because you have seen how these unclean spirits have a hold on people? Will you be happy to liberate them so that they too have the freedom to follow Jesus and experience the good news of the Gospel?
- How do you feel about Jesus' first instruction - taking so little with you on this mission? Do you feel you will be unable to carry out the mission without certain possessions that you have come to rely on so much? Do you feel lost without them? Or do you feel a sense of liberation because you have become so attached to them and they are preventing you from carrying out your mission? Do you feel that without them you will be able to better focus on your mission? How do you feel about trusting Jesus and relying entirely on God?
- Why do you think that Jesus tells you to stay in the one house until you leave the district? Could it be that he is afraid that if you start shopping around, you might favour a rich house to a poorer one? Do you feel that Jesus wants you to treat everyone as equal?
- Why do you think Jesus tells you if you are not made welcome that you are to shake the dust from your feet and

walk away? Is it because he feel that these people have refused to accept the gift of God's word? That they are not yet ready to receive the Good News of Salvation? Do you think Jesus is telling you to let go?

- How do you feel about the fruits of your mission – casting out devils, anointing many sick people with oil and curing them? Do you feel that with Jesus' authority, you have been able to offer freedom to people? That you have been able to bring them the gift of the Gospel? That you have been able to build a community of faith and have invited others to share in it? Do you feel that by going out with little you have been able to give much?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus' instructions to you. Talk to him where he is sending you on your mission and to whom you are being called to bring the Good News of salvation. Spend some time talking to him about how you can bring his presence to them and what is preventing you from doing so.

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.