

Imaginative Contemplation – Rest for a while



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 can rest in the company of Jesus. Let us pray that by resting we can be re-invigorated so that we are able continue on our mission.

Reading Mark 6:30-34

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.

But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

Contemplation

Today's Gospel from St Mark, is a continuation from last week's Gospel where we see Jesus sending out his disciples to preach repentance, heal the sick, and drive out demons. In this Gospel reading we see the disciples returning from their mission and reporting back to Jesus all they had been doing. Let us enter the scene and watch it unfold.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the chosen twelve? Are you one of the crowd? Perhaps you are someone or something not mentioned in the story.

- How do you feel as you return from your first mission without Jesus? Excited because you have healed the sick and cast out unclean spirits? A greater sense of God working in you and through you? Proud that you have achieved by trusting in Jesus what you thought was impossible for you to achieve? Are you all wrapped up in yourself and your achievements?
- When Jesus invites you to go to a lonely place and rest for a while, how do you feel? Can you feel Jesus' sensitivity and compassion for you when he realises you are being pulled in all directions? Are you grateful that Jesus has noticed you need a well earned break? Are you grateful to Jesus for inviting you to come and rest for a while? Are you happy he noticed that you have not had time to eat? Has your commitment to following Jesus as his disciple left you feeling tired and overwhelmed?
- How do you feel when to leave the crowds and go off in the boat? Do you feel you won't be able to rest because you are over-excited at what you have achieved? Are you quite happy basking in the glory and admiration of the crowds so you don't want to leave? Are you glad to get away from the crowds because you are tired in body and spirit and would like time to contemplate?
- What do you talk to Jesus about when you are in the boat with him? Are you all sharing your experiences with each other? Are you enjoying the companionship of Jesus and your friends? What is the mood in the boat like?
- How do you feel when you see that the crowd has followed you? Do you feel that your break has been short-lived? Are you annoyed with the crowd? Irritated? Do you feel oppressed by them? Are you annoyed that your break has been interrupted and Jesus gives in to their demands? Or do you too feel sorry for the crowds? What does Jesus tell you to do? To go on to the quiet place and reflect on your experiences? Do you think Jesus should have continued with his break too?
- What does Jesus' response to the crowd tell you about him? Do you see that he has discerned that there is a great need to be filled? That there is a great spiritual hunger that needs satisfying? Do you see his compassion and empathy for the

crowd? Do you aspire to be like Jesus, to put the needs of others before your own? Do you wonder how you can discern between the importance of recharging your own batteries and responding to the needs of others?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus affirming the importance of times of rest and renewal. Talk to him about the people whose need you are being called to fulfil. Ask him for the grace to respond as he did.

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.