

Imaginative Contemplation – This is the carpenter, surely



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 be open to the words and deeds of Jesus who is present in the people we know. Let us pray that we do not close our hearts to them because they are familiar to us.

Reading Mark 6:1-6

Jesus went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him.

And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house'; and he could work no miracle there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Contemplation

Today's Gospel from St Mark, is a continuation from last weeks Gospel where we see Jesus healing the woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus' daughter. In this passage we see Jesus going back to his home town with his disciples to be with the people he knows and grew up with. Go with Jesus to the synagogue on the Sabbath, watch him unroll the scroll and teach with authority and wisdom. Watch the story unfold.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the people who has come to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath? One of his relatives? Someone who has known Jesus since childhood? Perhaps you are someone or something not mentioned in the story.
- Notice what is going on around you. Notice your mood and the mood of the people around you? Notice the mood Jesus is in. Is he excited because he is back home with his friends and family? Do you wonder what kind of reception he will receive as he returns to his home town?
- Do you go with Jesus to the synagogue or are you already there? Is there a large congregation in the synagogue? Where are you in it? Near Jesus? At the back?
- Why have you come to the synagogue? Is it because you are with Jesus or one of his disciples? Have you come because it is the sabbath and it is your normal practice to worship on the sabbath? Have you come because you have heard Jesus is back in town and you want to hear him teach? Do you know Jesus and his family and you are curious about the miracles you have heard about so you want to see if it is the same Jesus you know and grew up with?
- As you listen to Jesus teaching in the synagogue, what is going on in your mind as you hear his critics? Do you agree with them that he is only the carpenter and who does he think he is trying to teach you? Do you feel that as he is one of you, what more could he know about God? After all, did you not all grow up together, were educated together and shared your dreams about the future? Were you annoyed and jealous that he left? Do you believe that he, the carpenter's son could have been granted wisdom and that miracles had been worked through him? Do you not hear Jesus message because you have been blinded by his familiarity?
- Or as you listen to Jesus teaching in the synagogue, are you moved by his words? Are you moved by his wisdom? Do you realise this this person whom you have grown up with, has been touched by God? As you listen to Jesus, do you recognise that grace and love of God are active and alive in him?

- How do you feel as you hear Jesus saying that a prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house? Sad because he has been met with disbelief by his own friends and relatives despite the miracles he has performed? Sad because you have the feeling he knew that he would be treated as pretentious, someone acting above his station? Are you puzzled by his wisdom and great works of healing? Baffled because you think you know Jesus and you clearly don't?
- Do you realise that Jesus can't perform miracles there because of the lack of faith? Because his kinsfolk have closed their hearts and minds to the wonders of God personified in Jesus? Because they have put Jesus in the role of a carpenter and they can't see beyond it? Do you feel Jesus' disappointment at they lack of faith?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus' words of wisdom. What impression has he made on you? Speak to him about it – about his humanity at being disappointed at the people's lack of faith and about his divinity as evident from his wisdom and miracles.

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.