

Imaginative Contemplation – Be Opened



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.

Let us sit and relax so that together we can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

We acknowledge we are in the presence of God so let us say together:

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 enlighten our minds so that our ears be open to the word of God and the fullness of Jesus' message and our tongues be loosened to proclaim openly his Good News.

Reading Mark 7:31-37

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'.

And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

Contemplation

Today's Gospel of 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, is a continuation of the Gospel of Mark in which we see Jesus curing a deaf man with a speech impediment. Jesus is travelling through Gentile territory, a place he has been before and where he has healed a person possessed by a demon. Because of this, he will be already known in the region thus the reason people bring him this deaf man with the speech impediment. So let us enter the scene and be with Jesus as he cures the man.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? The deaf man with the speech impediment? One of the people who brought the man? An on looker? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- Notice what is going on around you. What is the mood like – of the people who brought the man, of the man himself, of the disciples,

of Jesus? What do you see and hear? What strikes you about the general atmosphere? Is this place busy? What are the surroundings like?

- If you are one of the people who brought this man to Jesus, why did you bring him? Had you heard of the miracles Jesus had performed in neighbouring towns and you knew he could restore your friend to wholeness? Do you feel so much for your friend being cut off from the outside world and having no voice that you would like him to be part of the community? Does your friend come willingly with you or is there some resistance? Is he afraid to accompany you to see Jesus? Are you worried that Jesus would refuse your request or does that not even enter your head? Why do you ask Jesus to lay his hands on your friend and not cure him? What was Jesus' facial expression like when you brought your friend to him.? One of pity? One of compassion? One of love?
- Were you surprised when Jesus takes your friend aside, in private and away from the crowd? Why do you think he does this? Do you think it is because he is sensitive to the man's feelings? That he does not want this man to feel embarrassed at being the centre of attention?
- If you are the deaf man with the speech impediment, what does it feel like having no voice in the community and cannot hear what is going on around you? Do you feel cut off from society? How do you feel about your friends taking you to Jesus? Are you resistant? Do you feel hopeful? Do you go willingly with them? How do you feel when Jesus takes you aside privately? Are you grateful to him for being considerate because you don't like being watched by the crowd? How do you feel when Jesus put his fingers in your ears and his spittle on your tongue? Do you feel that his spittle has healing properties? Do you feel the intimacy of Jesus as he touches you? Do you feel that raising his eyes to heaven in prayer is a sign of his compassion for you? When he says "Be Opened", how do you feel? A sense of liberation? A sense of joy that you can praise God's for his goodness? A sense of the world opening up to you? Are you afraid because you can now hear sound? Confused by the sound you hear? Or are you in awe by voices, birdsong, the general noise of life going on around you? Do you now feel part of the community? What do you do when you are healed? Where to you go? Who do you tell?
- If you are one of the crowd, what is going through your mind when you hear the words "Be opened"? Do you feel that this also applies to you? That you can be closed off from what really matters in life?

That you can be deaf to the words of God? Do you want to be able to speak clearly about the work of God in your life? Do you too feel you have been restored to a life of being open?

- Why do you think that Jesus asks you not to tell anyone? Do you think it is because he does not want to be regarded as a political leader or a king? Is your admiration for Jesus so great that you want to tell everyone about what you have seen and heard?

Spend some time speaking to Jesus about how you would like to be open to his teachings and proclaim his word. Ask him to touch you with his love, mercy and compassion.

Sharing

Let us now share what we thought, felt etc. only if you are comfortable to do so.

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.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd