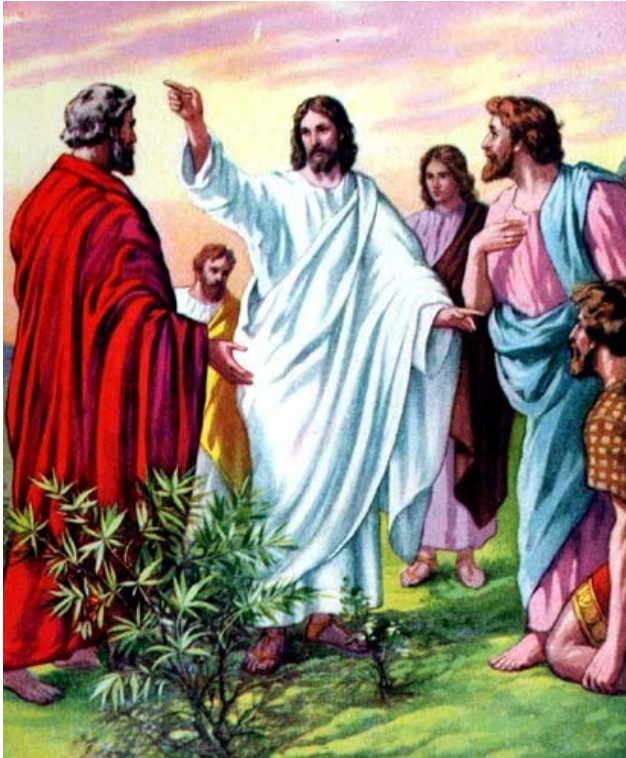


Imaginative Contemplation – He was not one of us



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 to help us see that the Spirit of Jesus is free to empower those outside our faith community and that we are not in an exclusive group because of our beliefs.

Reading Mark 9:38-43.45.47-48

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him'. But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us'.

'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.' 'But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck.

And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out".

Contemplation

As we continue reading the Gospel of St Mark on this the 26th Sunday of Ordinary time, we recall in last weeks Gospel, the disciples arguing as to who would be their leader when Jesus leaves them. Now we see them being jealous of others who are not one of them casting out devils in Jesus' name. Let us enter the scene to hear Jesus reply.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Are you the man who was casting out devils in the name of Jesus? Are you yourself? Someone not mentioned in the passage?
- Notice what is going on around you. What is the mood like – of the disciples, of Jesus, of the people around? What do you see and hear? What strikes you about the general atmosphere? What are the surroundings like?
- If you are John, why do you tell Jesus that you tried to stop a man who was casting out devils in his name? Why did you try to stop him? Were you jealous that someone who was not in your group was successfully casting out devils? Do you think that you are in an exclusive group and you despise others trying to help? Do you feel that being one of the disciples comes with personal privilege and that no-one else should intervene? Do you not want to share the power of Jesus' name with others?
- If you are one of the other disciples, what do you make of John "telling tales". Do you feel he was right to tell Jesus? Do you feel he was right to stop the man? Or did you recognise that the man was doing good and should be encouraged? Do you want clarification from Jesus?
- If you are the man casting out devils in the name of Jesus, how do you feel at being stopped by one of Jesus' disciples? Do you feel demoralised and belittled because you were only trying to do good? Do you feel angry with John because although you are not one of the disciples, you too believe in the power of God and Jesus? Do you feel afraid that you have overstepped your mark and Jesus will be angry with you? Do you wait around to hear what Jesus has to say to John and the disciples after you have been exposed or do you go away feeling discouraged??
- When Jesus said that John should not have stopped the man as anyone who is not against us is for us, how does that make you feel? If you are one of the disciples do you feel ashamed because you realise that your thoughts regarding those outside your select group are narrow minded? You realise that you are trying to monopolise Jesus? Do you realise that what is important to Jesus is whether or not good is being done in the community? Does Jesus make it clear that you should appreciate the good deeds done by others in the community and not be an obstacle to them?
- If you are the man who was exposed, how do you feel now? Do you feel encouraged that you have not overstepped your mark? That you can now carry on using the power of Jesus' name in all sincerity? Do you want to join Jesus disciples or would you rather

do what you can in your own community now you have Jesus' affirmation?

- Has Jesus impressed on you that doing a good act, even if it is insignificant as giving someone a cup of water, is what you will be rewarded for? Has he impressed on you that there will be consequences if you should hinder others from believing in God? By his words, has Jesus convinced you that you have a responsibility to others particularly the little ones, those who are vulnerable, those regarded as insignificant by the community?
- As you listen to Jesus how does he sound? Is he angry with you? Do you think his words are seemingly harsh? Or do you think he is trying to impress on you that you as his followers are not meant to be an exclusive group? That he expects you to work with anyone of good will whether they share your beliefs or not? That he expects you to realise that the Holy Spirit works in everyone and is not exclusive to your group? Do you think Jesus is trying to tell you that power and rivalry has no place in his discipleship? That what is important is attention to the needs of others?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart and ask him to help you to be open and not narrow-minded or judgemental but instead to see how goodness works through everyone in different ways.

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