

Imaginative Contemplation – What were you arguing about?



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 the understanding that greatness is found in our loving service to the weaker members of our community.

Reading Mark 9:30-37

After leaving that place they made their way through Galilee; and Jesus did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again'. But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road? They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all'. He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'.

Contemplation

As we continue reading the Gospel of St Mark on this the 25th Sunday of Ordinary time, we hear Jesus again predict his passion, death and resurrection to his disciples. Let us enter the scene and join Jesus on the road with his disciples.. Notice their uncertainty and fear regarding Jesus' predictions and listen to their arguments about status.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? 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? What do you see and hear? What strikes you about the general atmosphere? What are the surroundings like?

- Why do you think Jesus is travelling in secret? Is it because he was instructing his disciples and he wanted some privacy? Is it because he was travelling in an area where he already had problems with the Pharisees?
- Do you think that because Jesus is acknowledging his passion, death and resurrection, he is trying to prepare his disciples for what they too will face? Do you think that he is trying to dispel their notion that being one of his disciples will bring triumph and glory as they perceive it?
- Why do you think the disciples are afraid to ask what Jesus means regarding his predictions? Do you think it is an indication that they are now becoming aware that being one of Jesus disciples is totally different than what they had imagined? Or that they are afraid of hearing the truth?
- Is there anything you are afraid of asking Jesus? Are you reluctant to admit that you don't understand some of Jesus' teachings because it will reveal your ignorance?
- When Jesus asks 'What were you arguing about on the road?' How do you feel? Do you feel ashamed? Embarrassed?
- Why were you arguing about who among you was the greatest? Was it because you wondered who would take over from Jesus if his predictions were true? Do you think that when Jesus is gone you will need a leader? Do you think you should be that leader? Are you too caught up in that false ambition and rivalry, in status and honour? Do you want to feel important?
- When Jesus tells you 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all', what is going through your mind? Do you feel challenged? Does it make you feel insecure? Do you realise that Jesus is telling you that authority comes in the form of service to others? That authority comes in the form of loving others? That authority comes in the form of commitment to others? That authority is all about putting others first? Do you feel ready for the demands that this type of service will put on you?
- When Jesus 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name', what is going through your mind? Do you see that Jesus is using the example of the little child to illustrate the lowly and the weak and vulnerable in the community? That they are the ones who need our protection? That we should have the trusting nature of a child in order to trust Jesus, even if we are going into unknown territory?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart and ask him how true greatness is found in humility and your desire to be ambitious to be more like him.

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