

## Imaginative Contemplation – Let the children come



### 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 we can feel God's faithful love for us, a love that can help us endure the challenges we are faced within our own fragile relationships.

## **Reading      Mark 10:2-16**

Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us' they said 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.'

Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.'

Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'

People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

## **Contemplation**

As we continue reading the Gospel of St Mark on this the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time, we recall in the previous three weeks that Jesus has been talking to his disciples in private. He has been addressing only them. This week we see Jesus returning to familiar territory with the crowds gathering

around him. Let us enter the scene and listen to what Jesus' response to the Pharisees question about divorce.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Are you one of the Pharisees? One of the crowd? One of the women bringing up their child to Jesus to be blessed? Perhaps one of the little children? 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 Pharisees, of the people around? What do you see and hear? What strikes you about the general atmosphere? What are the surroundings like?
- What is going through your mind when you hear some Pharisees question Jesus about divorce? Are you interested to hear what he has to say because you are unclear what the answer is?
- How do you feel when Jesus tells you that divorce is not permissible? Is this a joyful message because you have received the wonderful gift of a harmonious marriage? Or is this a source of hurt for you because marriage for you has been difficult? Do you see Jesus' words as rules and regulations for your relationship? Or do you see it as God's vision for his love for us? Do you feel Jesus does not understand marital relationships because he, himself is unmarried? Or do you think that Jesus, because of his relationship with the Father is emphasising God's loving plan for us?
- As you listen to Jesus, can you hear he is telling us that it is the hardness of heart that brings about divorce he is condemning? That people must treat each other with respect in a relationship and not as a worthless belonging?
- Do you think Jesus' teaching on marriage is more challenging than that of the Pharisees which allowed for the husband to divorce his wife and remarry? Can you see that Jesus is treating both men in women equally in marriage? How does that make you feel? Do you feel that God's love is present in both partners? Prior to this had you always felt that marriage was one-sided?
- How do you feel when people started bringing up their little children to be blessed by Jesus? Are you annoyed with these mothers because you were listening to Jesus teaching about marriage and divorce? Are you pleased that the disciples take charge and turn them away? Or do you feel that this is not the first time the disciples have overstepped their authority? Do you think that the disciples have got it wrong and that the love God bestows on us in marriage should pour out on these little ones and the most vulnerable in the community? Can you see that this is not the first

time that Jesus has emphasised that the openness and simplicity of children is what we need to enter the kingdom of heaven?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart about what you find challenging in his teachings on marriage and welcoming children. Ask him to help you foster your relationship with God so that his love pours forth from you to nurture your relationship with your spouse and children.

### **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