

## Imaginative Contemplation – Who can be saved?



### 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 know the disordered attachments that keep us from putting our trust and faith in God's goodness.

## Reading **Mark 10:17-30**

Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother.' And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days'. Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, 'There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' They were more astonished than ever. 'In that case' they said to one another 'who can be saved?'

Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he said 'it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.' Peter took this up. 'What about us?' he asked him. 'We have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land - not without persecutions - now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.

## Contemplation

As we continue reading the Gospel of St Mark on this the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time, we continue where we left off from last week – the Pharisees putting Jesus to the test regarding the law on divorce – and Jesus continuing his journey to Jerusalem. Let us enter the scene and listen to what Jesus tells us to do in order to inherit eternal life.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? A follower of Jesus? One of the crowd? The rich young man? 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 rich young man, 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 this rich young man asks Jesus what can he do to inherit eternal life? Do you know this man? Does he seem anxious, weary, solemn, well meaning? Are you curious to hear what Jesus has to say to him?
- When Jesus tells him he must keep the commandments, do you think this sounds straight-forward? Do you wonder why he has mentioned only those commandments which relate to our relationships with other people and not God?
- When the young man said in all sincerity that he had kept these commandments from his earliest days, what was going through your mind? Did the young man think that was all he would need to do? Do you think he felt if he continued with keeping these commandments he would inherit eternal life? Do you notice Jesus' loving gaze on him? Do you think the young man noticed? Do you feel Jesus' loving gaze on you? Do you feel that despite your limitations and weaknesses, Jesus still loves and understands you?
- How do you feel when Jesus asks the young man to sell everything, give the money to the poor and follow him? Are you sorry for him as this is challenging and definitive? Do you feel the sadness in the young man's heart at Jesus' seemingly harsh request? Or do you realise that this young man is too attached to his possessions? That his disordered attachments are keeping him from being free to serve God and follow Jesus?
- When Jesus tells you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, how do you feel? Are you worried and shocked by these words or do you start to wonder if your possessions get in the way of your

relationship with God? Do you feel that you, like this young man, could be missing out in the true treasures of life like love and friendship? Do you now feel that it is not riches that are the problem but your attitude towards them?

- Do you appreciate Peter telling Jesus that you have left everything to follow him? What has it meant for you to follow Jesus? What have you given up? What has following Jesus brought you? Joy? Contentment? Peace of mind and spirit? A deeper trust and faith in God?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart about what you would like to give up to follow him, about what is keeping you from following him and ask for a deeper trust and faith in his message.

### **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