

Imaginative Contemplation – Christ the King



Christ before Pilate - Pietro Lorenzetti ca. 1280 – 1348

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 may discern which are the voices that speak the truth to us.

Reading **John:18:33-37**

'Are you the king of the Jews?' Pilate asked. Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?' Jesus replied, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.' 'So you are a king then?' said Pilate. 'It is you who say it' answered Jesus. 'Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.'

Contemplation

On this, the last Sunday of the Church's Liturgical year, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King and reflect on the title we have given to Jesus. This year, the Gospel Readings have been taken from St Mark but on this Feast Day, we read an excerpt from St John's Passion which is read on Good Friday. This passage is a dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Let us enter the scene and listen to the conversation.

- Who are you in the scene? Pontius Pilate? One of the guards? One of the Sanhedrin? A Scribe or a Pharisee? Someone who came along to witness the proceedings? Yourself? Someone not mentioned in the passage?
- Notice what is going on around you. What is the mood like – of the of all those in the courtroom, of Jesus, of Pilate? What do you see and hear? What strikes you about the general atmosphere of Jesus' trial? What are the surroundings like? Who is there watching?
- What is going through your mind as you hear Pilate asking Jesus "Are you the king of the Jews" Do you wonder what Jesus' answer

will be? Do you wonder if his answer will influence the result of his trial? Do you think Pilate feels threatened at the thought of Jesus being a king?

- When Jesus replies “Do you ask this of your own accord”, what do you think Jesus means? Do you think Jesus is asking Pilot if his question is coming from himself, from his own curiosity, from his heart? Or could it be that Jesus wonders if Pilot is asking the question on behalf of others or perhaps something he has heard second-hand?
- Do you feel sorry for Pilate as he tries to defend his question by telling Jesus that it was his own people that put him on trial? Do you think that Pilate was not used to be spoken in this way thus his defensive reaction? Do you think that Jesus feels sorry for Pilate at being put in this situation through no fault of his own?
- When Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world, do you wonder what he means? That he means that his kingdom is other-worldly or that his kingdom is not like those we are familiar with, those that are power seeking and violent? That Jesus’ kingdom is based on other values like love, compassion and respect for others? Do you think Pilate understands this? How does he seem when Jesus says this? Does he appear less defensive and more intrigued? Do you feel he respects Jesus when he says to him “So you are a king, then?”
- What is going through your mind when Jesus admits that he is a king and has come into the world to bear witness to the truth? Has it captured your attention and Pilate’s? What do you understand the truth to be? Is it the simple truth that God loves us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, to suffer and die for us? Does this knowledge open your eyes to the real meaning of life? Does it make you want to be a follower of Jesus’ values and mission? Do you feel that Jesus’ mission is the way to life and its fullness?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart regarding his conversation with Pilate. Ask him to give you the eyes of faith to see and ears to hear his truth.

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
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