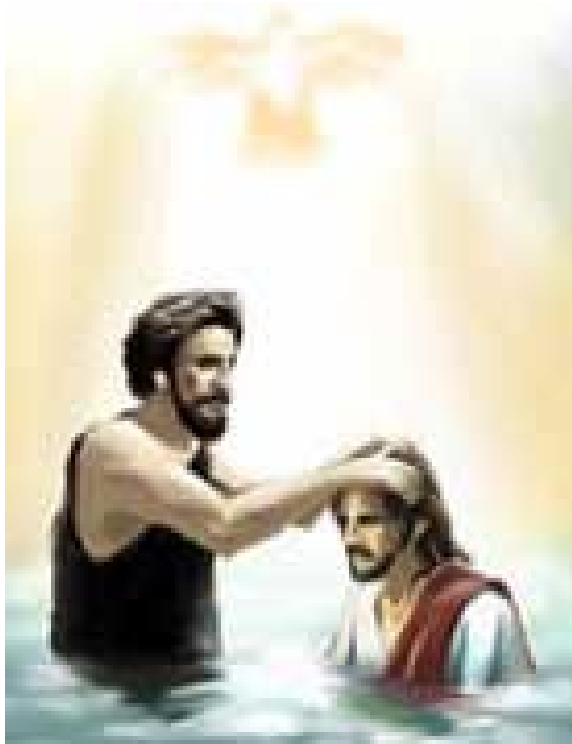


Imaginative Contemplation – You are my Son, the Beloved



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 too can emerge from the waters changed in the knowledge that that we, like Jesus, have been entrusted by God Our Father to carry out a mission

Reading **Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'.

Contemplation

Today's Feast, The Baptism of Our Lord, heralds the end of the of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It marks the transition from Jesus' hidden life to that of His public ministry. This feast also marks the third time Jesus' divinity has become apparent. The first being when the Angels announced his birth to the shepherds, the second being when His birth was revealed to the Magi by a star. With this in mind, let us too witness this revelation as we enter the scene at the Jordan.

- Who are you in the passage? John the Baptist? One of the crowd? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the passage.
- Why have you come to the Jordan? Have you come because you have a feeling of expectancy? Do you think that John might be the Christ? Have you come alone? Come with a friend? Have you heard about John the Baptist and wanted to hear him preach? Do

you feel the need for cleansing? Do you want to be forgiven of your sins and be converted?

- What is the scene around you like? Are there lots of people listening to John? Is there an orderly queue waiting to be baptised? Is there anything unusual about today that makes John explain 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire'. Do you look around to see if there is anyone who fits that description? Does John give you that feeling of expectancy?
- Are you watching John baptising people? Are you nervous? Do you expect to feel different when you emerge from the cleansing waters? Do you expect to feel new life as God's beloved child? Do you wonder if this is how you feel being baptised by water, how it will be to be baptised by the Spirit and fire? Do you think it will involve being a more active member of the community?
- You notice Jesus coming forward to be baptised? Is there anything, different or unusual? Do you notice Jesus at prayer? Do you see the Spirit descend on Him like a dove? Do you realise that Jesus has found a new Spirit, a new energy in himself after his prayer? Do you too find a new energy after your prayer to God? Have you ever felt the Spirit of God bring new life in you?
- Do you hear the voice come from heaven saying 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'? Do you realise that you have witnessed something heaven-sent? That you have witnessed the divinity of Jesus? That you have witnessed the Trinity in action? That through Jesus, God has opened a new way of communicating with us? What is your reaction to what you have witnessed?
- Do you now realise what being baptised with the Spirit and fire means? That it means being baptised with the love God lavishes upon us? That he looks on us as his beloved children? Do you believe you are a son or daughter of God? If not what are the things that are stopping you from doing so?
- Do you realise that Jesus' baptism was the way in which the Father introduced His Son and His Son's mission to the world? That on that day, Jesus' divinity was made manifest?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation speak to Jesus about your experience. Talk to him about your own baptism, and how through it, you to are being introduced to the world as a child of God and that same Spirit which descended on Jesus will be there to guide you in your mission.

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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