

Imaginative Contemplation – Can one blind man lead another?



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.

Sit and relax by focussing on your breathing for a few minutes so that you can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

Acknowledge you are in the presence of God by saying the following prayer:

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 guide our hearts and enlighten our minds as we ponder our relationship with others and to pray for the grace we need to accept them for who they are - a beloved child of God.

Reading Luke 6:39-45

Jesus told a parable to them, "Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,' when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

"There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart."

Contemplation

On this, the eighth Sunday in Ordinary time, the Gospel passage is the last part of Jesus discourse on the Plain which started by Jesus giving us a roadmap of how to live a life of love, and then going further by calling us to a new way of living, behaving and responding to our daily human encounters. Jesus concludes with three short parables regarding our relationship with others. Let us enter into the scene and listen to Jesus conclude his discourse.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of his disciples? Someone who is listening in on the conversation? Perhaps a person who is not specifically mentioned in the printed story?
- Where is Jesus talking to you? Are you still on the plain? Are there still people around or have many of them left? How long has Jesus been teaching you? What time of day is it? What is the weather like?
- What is the atmosphere like? Do you feel peaceful? Attentive? Confused and anxious because what Jesus is saying is very challenging? Are you tired?
- When Jesus asks you “Can one blind man lead another”, do you laugh as you envisage the scene? Do you think it is a stupid question because the answer is obvious? Or do you sit and listen attentively because you wonder where the question will lead? Do you realise when Jesus asks the question that the blindness is a spiritual blindness caused by the failure to change your attitude towards the poor, marginalised and those you regard as your enemies? Do you wonder if you are one of those blind people that Jesus describes, one who feels superior to others? Do you pray for lucidity and humility for yourself?
- When Jesus says “Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother’s eye”, do you feel insulted or do you think he is talking about those around you? Do you feel guilty because you realise you can be quick to criticise, ready to judge, have preconceptions and rationalise them instead of accepting them as brothers and sisters?
- When Jesus says “There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit”, do you realise he is talking about your heart? That by seeing things they way Jesus sees them will enable us to produce good deeds? That this requires integrity of heart which comes from the teachings of Jesus? That the good fruit that Jesus is talking about is produced when the Sermon on the Plain is put into practice?
- When Jesus says, “For a person’s words flow out of what fills their heart” do you realise he is talking about the way we treat others? That by by treating others with warmth, affirmation,

encouragement and compassion is drawing what is good from the store of goodness in your heart? Do you feel it sounds more appealing than spending your life constantly criticising and judging?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus' words. Is there anything you want to ask him? Give thanks for the love, friendship, generosity and compassion he has shown you and pray for lucidity and humility so that you too can aspire to be like him and be compassionate and loving to everyone

Let us now spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation

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.