

Imaginative Contemplation – Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man



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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 to enable us be like Simon Peter who with trust accepted Jesus' invitation to go out to deeper waters.

Reading Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.-He got into one of the boats - it was Simon's - and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch'.

'Master,' Simon replied 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man'. For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch'. Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

Contemplation

In today's Gospel reading, the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time C, we see Jesus calling Simon from a place of familiarity and shows him and us that his ordinary every day skills can be used for extraordinary purposes. Let us enter the scene and watch Jesus talking to the crowds and interacting with Simon.

- Who are you in the passage? Simon? Andrew? James? John? A fisherman? One of the crowd? Yourself?
- What are your surroundings like? Why are you there? Have you become caught up in the crowd or are you trying to get close to Jesus because you have heard him preach before? What is Jesus talking about? Do you feel the crowd pressing round trying to hear Jesus? What is the mood around you like?
- Do you notice Jesus leave the crowd and approach Simon? Do you hear what they are saying to one-another? Do you watch Jesus get into the Simon's boat and watch as Simon pulls out from the shoreline?
- What is the scene like now as Jesus teaches from the boat? Can you hear him better? Is it more comfortable? Is Jesus more at ease now that he is out of the crowd? Are you more at ease as you listen?
- When Jesus finishes speaking, does the crowd disperse? Do you also leave or do you wait behind?
- Do you hear Jesus inviting Simon to go out into deep water to put out his nets for a catch? How would you feel if Jesus asked you to go out into unfamiliar territory knowing that your familiar territory yielded nothing? Would you be afraid? Disheartened? Do you think it is a futile exercise? Or are you encouraged because you have faith in Jesus?
- How do you think Simon felt? Do you hear his reply of trust, succumbing to the invitation of Jesus? Do you watch Simon as he goes out into deeper waters? What do you notice about him? What do you think made him so ready to obey Jesus?
- Are you able to see Simon cast his nets? Do you see the huge catch of fish almost tearing the nets? Do you watch as he calls to his fellow fishermen for help? What is going through your mind as you watch these fishermen working seamlessly as a team to bring in the huge catch of fish? Do you think Jesus is showing us how we are all interdependent and are not expected to work alone?
- Simon said to Jesus, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man'. Do you too feel unworthy of God's abundant goodness? Do you realise that it was God who called you despite your sinfulness? Do you realise how lovingly God looks upon you and calls you to come nearer to him?
- Do you hear Jesus' words of consolation, "Do not be afraid?" Do these words help cast out your fear? Are you ready to leave everything and follow Jesus?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation speak to Jesus about your fear of going into deeper waters, into unknown territory, out of your comfort zone. Ask him to help you let go of what hinders you from having a deeper relationship with him. Ask him to help you use your skills and talents, no matter how ordinary you think they are, for the good of others.

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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