

## Imaginative Contemplation – Leave it one more year



### 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 to the goodness and patience of God who strives to help us to blossom to our full potential.

## **Reading      Luke 13:1-9**

It was just about this time that some people arrived and told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none.

He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."

## **Contemplation**

On this, the Third Sunday of Lent, Year C, we hear the call to repentance and also of God's patience. We read of a massacre and a disaster but we are left with a feeling of hopefulness knowing God will not abandon us. I would like to share with you my reflections of

this Gospel story as I enter into the Gospel passage and listen to Jesus give God's take on suffering and his love for us.

The massacre of these Galileans prayed on my mind. It seemed a callous thing to do but then Pilate was not averse to killing people who expressed a different view from him. But to kill these people in cold blood was an inhumane act. What was he trying to achieve? Was he trying to suppress our freedom? It left me feeling uneasy and sad, even more so when I heard about the terrible accident in Jerusalem, about the eighteen people who were killed during a building accident.. How must their families feel? To make things worse, we were always taught pain and death were a punishment from God. I was so confused. What could these victims have done to deserve being killed?

I heard Jesus was in town so I thought I would go and hear what he had to say about these tragic incidents. It seems that I was not the only one to seek out Jesus. When I found him, he was already talking about the incidences – after all, they were on everyone's minds and they were the current topic of conversation. I was so pleased to hear Jesus renouncing the notions that these tragic incidents were a result of God's anger with his people. He also told us that their deaths did not mean they were sinners. In fact, he said they were no more guilty of sin than the rest of us. Then Jesus said something that made me stop and think. He told us that unless we repent, we will perish as they did. Was Jesus giving us a warning not to become too complacent with our way of life and too satisfied in our ways? Perhaps he is telling me to look at my own life first and calling me to change whatever is stopping me from being a disciple. Trust Jesus to make me look inward and not outward.

Then as if to clarify the point, he told us a parable of the fig tree. I am that fig tree not producing the fruit I was created for. But God never gives up on me, always nurturing, watering, digging, fertilising so that I may flourish. He looks for that seed of goodness planted within me and will not let it die. God knows the faults and failings that keep me from growing but he perseveres, weeding and pruning. God is concerned about me but he is patient, compassionate and forgiving. He will not give up. All the nurturing he undertakes are little prompts, little nudges to help me bear beautiful juicy fruit and flourish to my full potential. All I need to do is respond to his nurturing and allow

him to transform my life. I left thinking of the ways I could blossom better. Perhaps being more patient, more generous with my possessions and gifts, being less selfish with my time, being more compassionate and tolerant. The list is endless, but these are the obstacles that keep me from a full relationship with God. Jesus can help me grow closer.

Now I invite you into the scene to ponder on Jesus' words. Can you relate to the people in the Gospel who are looking for answers to the atrocities that is happening in their world? What is Jesus telling you in this Gospel passage? In the Parable of the fig tree, does Jesus encourage you to repent? Is there something that you feel called to change? Is there anything hindering you? What sustenance do you think you need to be able to blossom to your full extent? Feel the goodness and love of God around you as you ask for his help.

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.