

Imaginative Contemplation – This is my Son, the Chosen One



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 pray that we are not led into temptation.

Reading Luke 9:28-36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'. - He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

Contemplation

Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent, we read the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is reported in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and this year, Year C of the lectionary, we hear from the account of St Luke. I would like to share with you my reflections of the Gospel story through the eyes of Peter as I go with Jesus to pray with his companions up the mountain.

I remember the day as though it were yesterday when Jesus invited James, John and I to go up the mountain with him to pray. Mountains are such holy places so Jesus must have chosen the mountain specifically to set the scene for what was about to come about. I often wondered why he chose me to be with him in this time of prayer especially since I have a habit of opening my mouth and putting my foot in it. He had only recently admonished me for wanting to protect him. He told me then that the way I thought was not God's way but man's way. We all walked in silence as we climbed. It was hot, the air was still and all I could hear was the occasional sound of birds and sheep.

When we reached a suitable place near the top of the mountain, we sat down to pray. As we prayed, I looked at Jesus and he seemed to be enfolded in a bright light. His face looked different. At first I thought it was the sun in my eyes but then I realised it was Jesus himself who was in brilliant white. He was then joined by two people, Moses and Elijah, who began to converse with him. I don't know about James and John, but my eyes were transfixed on them and I tried to hear what they were talking about. I felt joyful. Was this what being in heaven felt like? Was I seeing Jesus' divinity being revealed? I wanted to remain there with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. So, as always, I opened my mouth and asked Jesus would they like me to make each of them a tent. What was I thinking? Again I was thinking like in a human way. Would I never learn? I reasoned that if Jesus stayed up here safe in the mountain with Moses and Elijah, it would keep him from the death he kept telling us about.

All too soon this divine moment came to an end with a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' When I looked again, Jesus was alone. We all walked back in silence, deep in thought as to what we had just witnessed. At the time, I hadn't understood the importance of what I had just seen but now reflecting on the event, I do understand. This was an image of Jesus' Resurrection I had just witnessed.

Now that Jesus is dead, I know this is how it had to be. My human attempts to try and keep him safe was me not wanting to face the truth of what he was going to endure for our salvation. There was me on that mountain top not only trying to control the plans God had for his Son but also the plans God had for us, his chosen disciples.

Jesus still had a mission to fulfil and we, his disciples had so much to learn. That divine moment had to come to an end so that Jesus and we, his disciples could continue our mission. This was a scene witnessed by us and to be shared after Jesus died. Who else would have shared this moment if I had had my own selfish way and stayed on the mountain?

I now invite you into the scene to ponder the Transfiguration of Jesus. Envisage the scene unfolding before you and ask yourself why Jesus has chosen you to pray with him. Also ask what Jesus would like you to see and hear as you witness his transformation. As you watch Jesus being transformed by prayer, think about the times when prayer has transformed you.

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.