

Imaginative Contemplation – Follow Me!



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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.

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 enter our hearts and minds so that we too can have the courage to follow Jesus unconditionally and wholeheartedly when he invites us.

Reading Luke 9:51-62.

As the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from Heaven to burn them up?" But he turned and rebuked them, and they went off to another village.

As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Another to whom he said, "Follow me," replied, "Let me go and bury my father first." But he answered, "Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God."

Another said, "I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home." Jesus said to him, "Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Contemplation

Following the Sunday's of Easter and the three great Feasts of Pentecost, the Most Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi, we return to the

Sundays of Ordinary Time, Year C and continue to follow the mission and ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of St Luke. Let us enter the scene as we hear from Jesus the commitment we must make if we want to be one of his disciples.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the messengers? One of his disciples? Someone in the Samaritan village? James or John? Are you the person who said “I will follow you wherever you go”? The person who said “Let me go and bury my father first”? The one who said “Let me go and say goodbye to my family first”? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- What kind of day is it? Hot? Humid? What is the terrain like around you? Stony? Mountainous? Are you on flat grassy land?
- Notice what is going on around you. Do you sense an urgency and decisiveness in Jesus by the fact that he sends messengers on ahead of him as he makes his way to Jerusalem?
- Are you one of the messengers who have been rejected in the Samaritan village? Do you feel angry and vengeful because the villagers have refused to listen to Jesus’ message? Why do you feel angry and vengeful just because this group of people think differently from you? Why do you feel they deserve to be punished? Are you annoyed because Jesus does not let you take revenge on them? Annoyed that Jesus rebukes you and not the villagers?
- Do you think Jesus’ response to the people who have good intentions to follow him harsh? Do you feel that it is unreasonable of Jesus wanting them to drop everything immediately to follow him? Do you feel that Jesus is making things difficult for them? Do you think that those people have genuine concerns that had to be taken care of before they can follow him?
- Or do you think that they were just making excuses and although initially they were enthusiastic, when it came to making a commitment, their material attachments got in the way? Do you think they were not able to lay aside their own priorities so that they could follow Jesus in freedom? That they were tied down by worldly concerns? That their initial

enthusiasm waned once Jesus laid out the bare facts to the realities of discipleship?

- What about your call to discipleship? Can you see that the demands of discipleship i.e. truth, compassion, justice, freedom and peace, which we are called to build, comes before our own arrangements and priorities? Are you ready to let go of the external attachments that are barriers to discipleship or are you afraid of letting go because they make you feel secure?

Speak to Jesus about your concerns of following him? Ask him for the inner strength to say “I will follow you wherever you go” and for a deeper knowledge of ourselves to address whatever is keeping us from full discipleship..

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.