

Imaginative Contemplation – He Raised his eyes to Heaven



Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha

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 be touched by the generosity of Jesus in the giving of himself through his Body and Blood.

Reading Luke 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here." He replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people." "For there were about Five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, "Get them to sit down in parties of about Fifty." They did so and made them all sit down.

Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets

Contemplation

Today, the second Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate another solemnity, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ or the Feast of Corpus Christi. This Feast marks our return to Ordinary Time. In the Gospel reading today, we hear Luke's version of the feeding of the five thousand which is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels.

The photo is of a mosaic in the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha in the Holy Land and is on the floor near the altar. It depicts the miracle in today's Gospel Reading and shows a basket of loaves flanked by two Galilean mullets. Beneath the altar is the rock on which it is believed Jesus placed the loaves and fish when he blessed them. There are only four loaves in the basket – the altar on which the bread is consecrated is the fifth loaf. This miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, reminds us of the feeding of the Israelites in the desert and Elisha's feeding of 100 people with 20 loaves in the second book of Kings in the Old Testament and today us being fed by the Body and Blood of Christ. Let us enter the crowded scene and share in the banquet of the Lord.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the apostles? One of the crowd? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- What kind of day is it? Hot? Humid? Dusty? What is the terrain like around you? Stony? Mountainous? Are you on flat grassy land?
- Notice what is going on around you. What is the mood like – of the crowd, of the apostles, of Jesus?
- You notice Jesus making the crowds welcome? What does being made to feel welcome by Jesus mean for you? Do you try to get closer? Do you want to hear what he is saying? Is this the reason you are here? Is it because you are impressed by his teaching and you want to hear more? Are you hungry in spirit? Are you being fed by Jesus' teaching?
- How do you feel when Jesus' disciples want to send you away? Do you feel that their attitude is in stark contrast with Jesus' welcome and his compassionate teaching and healing?
- How do the disciples react when Jesus tells them to feed you themselves? Were they confused? Taken aback? Do you think they feel it is too big a problem for them to solve? After all, five loaves and two fishes wouldn't go far.
- Do you notice how Jesus solves this problem? That he makes what seems like an unsurmountable problem more manageable by asking his disciples to divide the multitude of people into groups of fifty?

- Are you still wondering how this small offering of five loaves and two fishes will go round everyone? Does Jesus show you that any offering, no matter how small, given in love and sincerity has a huge effect? Have you ever thought of what effect your own small offerings given in love would have on the community? Or would you rather not take the risk?
- You notice Jesus giving thanks for the bread and the fish. You watch Jesus giving out the food. Do you too hold up your hands for some? What is the look on Jesus' face as he hands you food? How do you feel as you accept the food and start to eat with the others around you?
- How do you envisage this banquet? Do you see in Jesus his desire to share himself with you in his teaching and in the Bread of life? Do you see that through Jesus, God is revealing his feelings towards us; feelings of compassion, care and concern for our needs? Do you see that God's love for us is abundant and lavish in that there were twelve baskets of food leftover? Do you see that the leftover food was collected because God's gifts to us should not be wasted?

Feel what is going on inside you as you eat of this banquet. Talk to Jesus about his offering of himself to you in the form of bread. Give thanks to God for the Bread of life given to us through Jesus.

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.