

## Imaginative Contemplation – Take up your cross and Follow me



Luke 14, 25-33

### 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 the difficult path we must follow in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

## **Reading      Luke 14:25-33**

Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way and he turned and spoke to them. "If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brother, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, 'Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish.' Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.

## **Contemplation**

As we continue listening to Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem, we hear yet more uncomfortable truths about what we must give up if we are to be his disciple. Let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus tell us about the cost of discipleship.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the crowd accompanying Jesus on the road? One of his disciples? An onlooker? Someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- Where are you? Are you in a village? In the countryside? Are there many people in the crowd? What is the atmosphere like? Look around at the people there. What is their mood like? Is there a

feeling of expectation? Excitement? Enthusiasm? Criticism? Why are you there? Could it be because when you listen to Jesus you find his words uplifting, inspiring, full of hope?

- When Jesus says "If anyone comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brother, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple", how does that make you feel? Do you find these words challenging and harsh as you try to understand them? After all isn't the Jesus you have come to know full of love and not hate? What about the next sentence "unless you taking up your cross and follow me you cannot be me disciple"? How do you react to these seemingly strong words?
- As you digest these statements, do you then realise that Jesus is saying that commitment to God is all or nothing? That discipleship is not half hearted? That if you want to be part of Jesus' mission you must give yourself completely and unconditionally?
- As these words of Jesus sink in, do you understand now that Jesus is not telling you to abandon your family because that would be contrary to his teaching of love but rather he is saying that anyone who puts anything or anyone before his teachings is not fully committed to discipleship? That the price of discipleship is sacrifice and suffering?
- When Jesus illustrates what he means regarding discipleship by giving the two examples of the man building a tower and the king marching to war, does it bring home to you his message of commitment? That you must not start something unless you are fully committed and serious about seeing it through to completion?
- Do these words of Jesus jolt you into thinking that perhaps you do not have this interior freedom that discipleship requires? That perhaps you have too many disordered attachments that prevent you from being totally committed to Jesus' mission? That you have put yourself in a secure place and you are reluctant to step outside of your comfort zone? Do you feel ready for this total commitment? Do you think the journey will bring you freedom? Do you think you would feel more prepared for this journey of discipleship if there is someone with whom you could journey with? Are you excited and charged with renewed energy at the thought of being a disciple of Jesus?
- Look around at the crowd again? What is their reaction now? What are they saying? Do you think they feel ready for this challenging commitment? Do you hope they are because you want to be part of this group of disciples?

Spend some time talking to Jesus about what you find demanding about discipleship, about what is holding you back from total commitment to his mission. Ask him what he wants of you.

## **Sharing**

Let us now share what we thought, felt etc. only if you are comfortable to do so.

## **End Prayer    Prayer for Generosity attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola**

Lord, teach me to be generous,  
to serve you as you deserve,  
to give and not to count the cost,  
to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil and not to seek for rest,  
to labour and not to look for any reward,  
save that of knowing that I do your holy will.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd