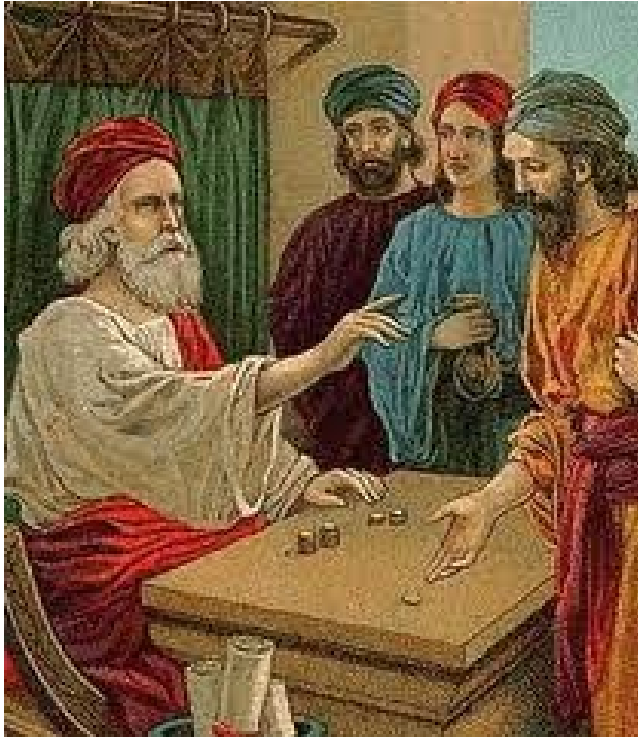


Imaginative Contemplation – The Dishonest Servant



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 so that we can be wise with our possessions, trustworthy with small things so that we can be trusted with larger things and serve God alone.

Reading **Luke 16:1-13.**

Jesus said to his disciples,

"There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer.' Then the steward said to himself, 'Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes.'

'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' One hundred measures of oil' was the reply. The steward said, 'Here, take your bond; sit down straight away and write fifty.' To another he said, 'And you, Sir, how much do you owe?' 'One hundred measures of wheat' was the reply. The steward said, 'Here, take your bond and write eighty.'

"The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness.

For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.

"And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity.

The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great; the man who is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in great. If then you cannot be trusted with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you cannot be trusted with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

"No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first

and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money."

Contemplation

On this the 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time C, Jesus talks to us about integrity and trustworthiness. Let us enter into the scene and listen to Jesus tell the parable of the dishonest steward.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Perhaps someone who is watching on? Perhaps you can associate yourself with the dishonest steward who has been caught out and uses his wiles to provide for his future? Perhaps you can identify with the owner of a business who discovers an employee is swindling him?
- What are the surroundings like? Where is Jesus telling this parable? Out in the open where others can hear? Inside where it is a bit more private?
- Look around you. What do you notice? What is the mood like of Jesus, of the disciples, of the others present? Do they look surprised? Confused? Enlightened?
- What is going through your mind as you listen to the parable of the dishonest steward? Or do you see it as a parable of a dishonest master? Do you think Jesus is giving out mixed messages? Or do you think this is more about using your worldly possessions that are God given gifts more wisely? That is is more about using our worldly goods justly and with consideration? With astuteness but with our hearts? Do you think is is more about the management of our God given gifts and talents whether as a steward or master, as opposed to using them for our own interests?
- As you listen to Jesus, do you see that we too have been appointed stewards? Stewards of our God given gifts and talents? Stewards of the temporal things around us? Stewards of God's creation? Do you see we have a responsibility in our stewardship not to squander or abuse our wealth? That we need wisdom and discernment to exercise our stewardship for the good of others?
- Have you ever wondered how you are managing the gifts God has you? Have you ever squandered them like the Prodigal son and found yourself in a position of not being able to provide for your future?
- Can you see that Jesus is not condoning the behaviour of the dishonest steward but praising his astuteness by the way he prepares himself for the future? Can you see that he is encouraging us to use the same canniness and astuteness to prepare ourselves for the Kingdom of God? Can you see that

Jesus is telling us that if someone can go to such lengths for his earthly existence, then they should go to the same lengths to prepare themselves for their life with God? That God comes first and to have a life with him, we must take the steps Jesus is laying out for us in his message of the Good news? Can you see this involves a life of integrity, of being trustworthy and truthful? A life built on love, compassion and justice to those around us?

Speak to Jesus about his difficult parable. Ask him for the shrewdness to be able to live in the world and for the wisdom to use your temporal God given gifts wisely.

Sharing

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

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..

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