

Imaginative Contemplation – Never lose heart



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 in the confidence that God hears our prayers and in his generosity, gives us what we need rather than what we want.

Reading Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. "There was a judge in a certain town", he said "who had neither fear of God nor respect for man. In the same town there was a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, 'I want justice from you against my enemy!' For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, 'Maybe I have neither fear of God nor respect for man, but since she keeps pestering me I must give this widow her just rights, or she will persist in coming and worry me to death.' "

And the Lord said, "You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?"

Contemplation

On this the 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time C, Jesus gives his disciples a lesson on the persistence of prayer. Let us enter the scene as he tells them a parable illustrating that if even an unjust judge responds to the perseverance of the widow, how much more so will God respond to our prayers if we do not lose heart.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Someone accompanying Jesus on the road to Jerusalem? An onlooker? Someone who needs some encouragement in prayer?
- Where is Jesus telling this parable? Outside in the open air? Inside a house? Notice what is going on around you. The sounds that you hear. The smells that fill the air. Is there a business about the place or are you isolated?

- What is the mood of Jesus as he was talking to you about the need to pray and never lose heart? Do you get the feeling that even he can feel despondent?
- Can you relate to the widow in the parable whose pleas for help seem to go unheard? Have you ever come across people like the judge in the parable who doesn't hear or even care about your predicament? What do you do? Do you persist with your complaint or do you give up in despair? How does it leave you feeling?
- What about your plea to God in prayer? Do you sometimes feel that God is not listening? That perhaps your plea isn't important? That there are so many other more important petitions in the world around you that you wonder if yours is even worth asking for?
- Does Jesus' parable confuse you? Do you think he is comparing this unjust judge to God? Does it make it sound as though God will eventually give in because he is weary of your constant nagging? Or do you think it is more like if someone who has neither fear of God nor respect for man can be nagged into acting justly, how much more readily will our loving and generous God respond to our petitions when we pray to him?
- Do you find it easy to persevere in prayer? Or do you get impatient with God when you feel that he has not answered your plea immediately? Does God's apparent silence make you lose heart? Or perhaps his silence strengthens your faith? Helps you trust in him more? Helps you trust the answer to your prayer more even if it is not the answer you were looking for?
- Have you ever had a prolonged period in your life where your prayers to God seemed to go unheard? How did it make you feel? Was your prayer eventually answered? Was it the response you expected? Did this prolonged prayer in your life open your heart to God's love for you thus making you trust him more? Do you see that your petition is a conversation with someone who loves you and is aware of all your needs?
- Have you noticed that the widow's pleas are for justice? Do you hear the cry of those who are being treated unjustly? Do you pray for justice in situations around you? Do you work to ensure that those in the margins are being treated justly?

Speak to Jesus about his lament at the end of the passage. Ask him to help you increase your faith so that when the Son of Man comes, he will indeed find faith on earth.

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
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