

Imaginative Contemplation – Everything will be destroyed



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 be able to trust God's mercy and protection, even when we are facing difficulties.

Reading Luke 21:5-19

When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All these things you are staring at now - the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another: everything will be destroyed." And they put to him this question: "Master," they said "when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that this is about to take place?"

"Take care not to be deceived," he said "because many will come using my name and saying, 'I am he' and, 'The time is near at hand.' Refuse to join them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened, for this is something that must happen but the end is not so soon." Then he said to them, "Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines here and there; there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

"But before all this happens, men will seize you and persecute you; they will hand you over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and bring you before kings and governors because of my name - and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. Keep this carefully in mind: you are not to prepare your defense, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your endurance will win you your lives."

Contemplation

Today's Gospel, the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time C, comes at the end of Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem, just prior to his Passion. His warnings and

predictions about the destruction of the temple and the persecutions that will occur sound menacing. Let us enter the scene and listen to these warnings and predictions.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Someone who accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem? Someone in the temple?
- 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? Are there many people in the temple? What is the mood like of those around you? Is it noisy?
- Why are you there? Is it because you hope to hear Jesus preach? Have you travelled far or are you local?
- What is going through your mind as you watch people admiring the decor of the temple? Do you feel they are treating it like a tourist attraction? That they have forgotten what the purpose of the temple is – a place of prayer for praising God and giving thanks? Do you think that many do not see beyond the surface and adornments? Or do you too admire the decor and feel that it is a befitting dwelling place for God?
- How do you feel when Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple? Insecure because the temple is the place where God lives among his people? Anticipation because you wonder if this destruction will be the end of things as you know them? Or do you have faith in the teaching of Jesus and believe that this disaster will open up new opportunities? Has something precious to you ever been destroyed? How did you cope and did you grow stronger as a result?
- How do you react when you hear of the terrible things that will happen in the world? Do you feel they are already happening? Countries are at war? The earth is being destroyed through depletion of its resources and climate change? How does that make you feel? Afraid because it is out of your control? Or a feeling of compassion that moves you to doing something practical?
- How do you feel when Jesus predicts that you will suffer betrayal and persecution because of him? That life will not be easy? Happy to bear witness? Consoled that Jesus himself will give you an eloquence and wisdom that our opponents will be unable to contradict? Encouraged by Jesus' own endurance to his opponents?
- Have you ever experienced hatred in your life? Did the fact that Jesus also faced hatred give you the courage to face yours? Does Jesus also give you courage when he tells you that “not a

hair of your head will be lost? Do you think he is telling you
despite these terrible predictions you should not lose heart?
Speak to Jesus about these difficulties you will face. Ask him for the
courage, strength and faith to follow his example, and to trust in God's
mercy and protection despite these difficulties.

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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