

Imaginative Contemplation – He is God of the living



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 fact that God is the God of the living and that our relationship with him starts here on earth.

Reading Luke 20:27-38

Some Sadducees - those who say that there is no resurrection - approached Jesus and they put this question to him.

Master, we have it from Moses in writing, that if a man's married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. Well, then, there were seven brothers. The first, having married a wife, died childless. The second and then the third married the widow. And the same with all seven, they died leaving no children. Finally the woman herself died. Now, at the resurrection, to which of them will she be wife since she had been married to all seven;"

Jesus replied, "The children of this world take wives and husbands, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are sons of God. And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all men are in fact alive."

Contemplation

In today's Gospel, the 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time C, we see a priestly faction of Judaism, the Sadducees, who were based in the temple, trying to trick Jesus into contradicting the Law of Moses regarding the resurrection of the dead. Let us enter into the scene and listen to how Jesus answers their question regarding the dead.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of the disciples? Someone accompanying Jesus on the road to Jerusalem? An onlooker? One of the Sadducees?
- Where is Jesus when he is approached by the Sadducees? Outside in the open air? 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? Why are you there? Is there a crowd of people listening? What is the mood like of those around you?
- Do you notice the group of Sadducees approaching? What is their mood like? Are they approaching with intent? Do they look hostile? Do you think this could spell trouble? Do you know that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection?
- When they start “Master, we have it from Moses in writing ...” do you feel they are going to try and trick Jesus? Do you stay around to listen? What is going through your mind as you listen to the Sadducees as they try to scorn the idea of rising from the dead by using the Law of Moses regarding marriage as an example? That a man was obliged by law to marry his brother’s widow to raise up children in his brother’s name in order to provide an heir and to carry on the family name? Do you wonder what Jesus will say in reply?
- How do you feel when Jesus explains to the Sadducees that on death, life has not ended, only changed? Do you feel that Jesus is inviting them and those listening to see beyond the confines of time and space? To open their minds and ours to other possibilities? To share in God’s vision for us by inviting them to try and imagine the wonders God has in store for them? Can your views, like those of the Sadducees be sometimes too confined and you fail to see beyond them?
- Jesus tell us that “God is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all men are in fact alive.” How does that make you feel when you think of those who have gone before you? How does it make you feel about your ancestors? Happy, that you can communicate with them? Comforted to know that there are no ‘dead’ people as they have passed through death and are now fully alive as children of the resurrection? Does this make you less fearful of death?

Speak to Jesus and ask him to open your mind beyond all that is logical for you. Ask him to open your heart so that you can see beyond your presumptions. Ask him for help to go beyond all that you have become used to.

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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