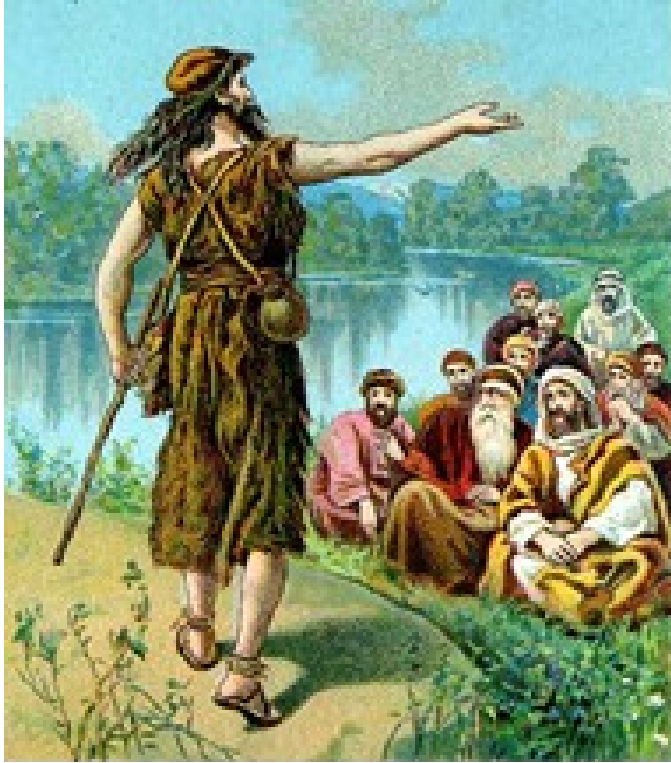


## Imaginative Contemplation – Are you the one who is to come?



### 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 are able to "Rejoice in the Lord always" knowing that he is near.

## **Reading      Matthew 11: 2-11**

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?" Jesus answered, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me".

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you.

"I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is."

## **Contemplation**

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and is known as Gaudete Sunday which is the Latin for Rejoice. In this Sunday we Rejoice because we are reminded that our salvation is near. In this week's Gospel reading, we continue to focus on the person of John the Baptist. Last week we heard John talking about Jesus; this week we hear Jesus talking about John. Let us enter the scene as we listen to Jesus' message to the disciples of John

who has been arrested and put in prison.

- Who are you in the scene? Are you one of John's disciples? One of the people whom Jesus was addressing? Someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- Notice what is going on around you. The sounds that you hear. The smells that fill the air. Where are you? Where is this encounter taking place?
- Look around you at those present. What are the expressions on the faces of John's disciples as Jesus gives them a message for John? What expressions are on the people's faces as they listen to Jesus? Are they listening intently?
- Why do you think John sent messengers to ask "Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?" Do you think that in a moment of darkness in his prison cell John was losing heart? Having doubts? Do you think John was disillusioned by Jesus in that he was expecting someone more political, more austere? Do you think John was wondering if he got it right regarding Jesus? Do you think he was expecting someone more focused on punishment? Do you think John expected Jesus to be taking a different approach? Or do you think he just needed a bit of reassurance as he sat in his prison cell wondering about Jesus?
- When Jesus tells John's messengers that they should look at the signs of healing he has done, that dead that have been raised to life, and bringing of the Good News to the poor, do you think he expects John to understand that he is fulfilling the vision of the prophesy of Isaiah? Do you think this message would be the reassurance that John needs in his moment of doubt? Why do you think that Jesus does not directly answer the question but points out his actions?
- What about you? How do you feel when Jesus questions you about your opinion of John the Baptist? What did you expect when you went out to the wilderness to see him, to be baptised? Did you expect to find someone more eloquent and refined? Or had you heard about him and were only interested in hearing his proclamation of the coming of the Messiah?
- As you listen to the prophets of today, what do you expect to see and hear? What are you waiting for in this season of Advent?

Speak to Jesus about your times of uncertainty and ask him to help you ask the right questions directly to him..

Let us now spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation

## **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