

## Imaginative Contemplation – My favour rests on him



### 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 too can emerge from the waters changed in the knowledge that that we, like Jesus, can hear the voice of God saying to us "This is my Beloved; my favour rests on him."

## **Reading      Matthew 3:13-17**

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him. "It is I who need baptism from you," he said "and yet you come to me!" But Jesus replied, "Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands." At this, John gave in to him.

As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him."

## **Contemplation**

Today's Feast, The Baptism of Our Lord, heralds the end of the of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It marks the transition from Jesus' hidden life to that of His public ministry. This feast also marks the third time Jesus' divinity has become apparent. The first being when the Angels announced his birth to the shepherds, the second being when His birth was revealed to the Magi by a star. With this in mind, let us too witness this revelation as we enter the scene at the Jordan.

- Who are you in the passage? John the Baptist? One of the crowd? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the passage.?
- Picture the scene around you? What is the terrain like? Is there vegetation or is it arid? What is the River Jordan like? Is it fast-

flowing or calm? Are there lots of people listening to John? Is there an orderly queue waiting to be baptised by John?

- Why have you come to the Jordan? Have you heard about John the Baptist and wanted to hear him preach? Have you come to be baptised? Do you think that John might be the Christ? Have you come alone? Come with a friend? Do you want to be forgiven of your sins and be converted?
- Are you watching John baptising people? Are you nervous? Do you expect to feel different when you emerge from the cleansing waters? Do you expect to feel new life as God's beloved child?
- Do you notice John in conversation with someone in the water? Do you know him to be Jesus, Son of Mary? Wonder what Jesus and John are saying to one another? Watch and listen more closely? Wonder why John is reluctant to baptise him? Wonder if Jesus is the Messiah that John said would baptise with fire and the Holy Spirit? Do you suddenly have a feeling of expectancy?
- Do you wonder why he, the Son of God needs to be baptised by John, which is a baptism of repentance? Since Jesus has nothing to repent, do you think this is strange? Do you think that Jesus could be fulfilling the will of God?
- After John baptises Jesus, do you see the Spirit descend on Him like a dove? Do you realise that Jesus has found a new Spirit, a new energy in himself to begin his mission? Have you ever felt the Spirit of God bring new life in you? To give you energy to start something new?
- Do you hear the voice come from heaven saying 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'? Do you realise that you have witnessed something heaven-sent? That you have witnessed the identity and divinity of Jesus being revealed? That you have witnessed the Trinity in action? That through Jesus, God has opened a new way of communicating with us? What is your reaction to what you have witnessed? Who or which experience has most revealed to you your identity, vocation and mission?
- Do you now realise what being baptised with the Spirit and fire means? That it means being baptised with the love God lavishes upon us? That he looks on us as his beloved children? Do you believe you are a son or daughter of God? If not what are the things that are stopping you from doing so?
- Do you realise that Jesus' baptism was the way in which the Father introduced His Son and His Son's mission to the world? That on that day, Jesus' divinity was made manifest?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation speak to Jesus about your experience. Talk to him about your own baptism, and how through it, you to are being introduced to the world as a child of God and that same Spirit which descended on Jesus will be there to guide you in your mission.

### **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