

Imaginative Contemplation –The Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand



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 can hear the call of Jesus in our every day lives and have the courage to follow him.

Reading Matthew 4:12-23

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!

Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,

Galilee of the nations!

The people that lived in darkness

has seen a great light;

and those who dwell in the land and shadow of death

a light has dawned.

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.

He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Contemplation

In today's Gospel reading, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary tome A, we see Jesus starting his ministry having been baptised in the Jordan by John. Matthew wants to show us that by starting his ministry in Galilee Jesus is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophesy and is thus the Messiah. Jesus then goes on to call his first disciples. So let us enter the scene, listen to Jesus teaching and watch him call his first disciples.

- Who are you in the passage? Are you someone who saw Jesus being baptised and want to find out more about him? One who heard John refer to him as the "Lamb of God who as come to take away the sin of the world"? Are you Simon or his brother Andrew? James or his brother John? Are you a passer-by who overheard the call? Are you one of the crowd Jesus is preaching to?
- Are you familiar with the prophesy of Isaiah that the Messiah will come from Galilee? Do you see Jesus as the Messiah when you hear him teach? Do you see him as a light in your daily living? Are you a light to others in your daily living?
- When he tells you to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." do you hear that he is repeating John's message? Do you hear his call to return to God? Is Jesus' preaching a light in this world of darkness for you? Do you do want to be part of Jesus' teaching that will bring people to a new way of living in truth, love, freedom and justice?
- Are you one of those Jesus called as you were fishing? Did you notice him passing by or were you too busy with your nets? What was it about Jesus that made you drop your nets and follow him?
- Had you already encountered Jesus? Perhaps you had witnessed his baptism? Heard him in the synagogue? Did you hear him when he first preached the coming of God's kingdom? Did you already sense what Jesus was about? Did you realise that in Jesus' mission and ministry he was going to need disciples?
- Do you wonder why Jesus chose you considering there were many fishermen along the shore of the Sea of Galilee that day? Do you feel that there were others who may have been better qualified? Others with better skills? Others that were more intelligent and had more money?
- Is there something about Jesus' invitation that intrigues you? Excites you? Do you wonder what being a fisher of men could mean? Why are you willing to risk all considering you have no certainties about what being a follower of Jesus could mean? Why do you drop everything for someone you don't know that well? Why

do you walk away from your security? Are you afraid of not knowing what the future holds and not having any idea where your journey with Jesus will take you? What was it about Jesus that makes you surrender yourself in a complete act of trust?

- Have you come to a point in your life where you feel ready to step outside your comfort zone? Are you ready to cast away the nets that are limiting your freedom to go into the unknown?
- What about your friends and family? What do they think about you giving up everything to be a “fisher of men”? Do you go with their blessing or are they disappointed that you will no longer be part of their fishing community? Do they understand? What do you tell them?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, speak to Jesus about how he felt when he heard John was arrested. Ask him if he was afraid that he would suffer the same fate. Talk to him about his call to you. Ask to have the freedom and courage to follow the call and to be ready to go wherever he is asking you to go.

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