

Imaginative Contemplation – Lead me not into temptation



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 take us over and enlighten our minds as we reflect on the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Let the Spirit lead us too into the wilderness so that we can be with Jesus.

Reading Matthew 4:1-11.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves". But he replied, "Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God".

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God" he said "throw yourself down; for scripture says:

"He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone".

Jesus said to him, "Scripture also says:

"You must not put the Lord your God to the test".

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these," he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me."

Then Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

"You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone."

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him

Contemplation

On this, the First Sunday of Lent, we see Jesus, after his baptism by John, going out to the desert to fast and pray for forty days. Imagine the scene, find a place within it. With the help of the Spirit, let the story unfold in your imagination.

- Who are you within the story? A shepherd? Someone who has followed Jesus into the desert? Perhaps a person or thing that is not specially mentioned in the printed story?
- What time of day is it? What is the atmosphere like? Hot? Oppressive? Is there a breeze?
- What can you see, hear and feel around you? What is the location and scenery like? The Gospel calls it the wilderness – is there any growth of plants? Is the landscape flat, mountainous?
- What are the sounds, the smells? Do you hear animals nearby or in the distance? What other details about the location do you notice?
- Do you know Jesus? Why are you in the wilderness? Do you know how long Jesus has been in the wilderness?
- Do you notice Jesus being approached? What does the person look like? Can you hear what is being said? Look at the expressions on Jesus' and this person's face and listen to the tone of their voices. What happens as you watch and listen?
- What is your reaction when this man says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves". Are you surprised that he is being referred to as the Son of God? How do you feel when Jesus quotes Scripture as a reply "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God". Have you ever been tempted to put your own personal needs first?
- When Jesus is tempted again but this time by putting God's promise of protection to the test; Jesus again quotes Scripture by saying "You must not put the Lord your God to the test". How do you feel? Have you ever put God to the test by wanting divine intervention for something unreasonable? Do you sometimes want to attract notice so that you can be popular?
- When the tempter offers Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if he worships him, Jesus this time banishes him by saying "Be off, Satan! For scripture says: "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone." Had you realised that this was Satan? How do you feel? Are you afraid? Surprised that Satan looked so ordinary? How would you have reacted to this temptation? Are there times when you want to be influential, dominating others, rather than serving them?
- What is your reaction to the temptations of Jesus? Do you know yourself and your temptations? Do you put your trust in the protection of God so that you can resist them? Do you ask God daily to "Lead you not into temptation?"

As you start your journey through Lent this year, ask Jesus to help you follow him with the same confidence and trust that he had in the face of temptation, that God's word alone being enough and that His promise of protection can be trusted. "Lead me not into temptation"

We will sit with our thoughts and imagination for 10 minutes

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.