

Imaginative Contemplation –The salt of the earth



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 be the salt of the earth and light of the world in our words and deeds.

Reading Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven."

Contemplation

Today's Gospel reading, the 5th Sunday in Ordinary time, directly follows on from last week's Gospel in which through the Beatitudes Jesus tells us that our relationship with God goes beyond the keeping of the ten commandments. Let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus as he goes on to describe this life of discipleship by using every day commodities of salt and light.

- Who are you in the passage? Are you someone who was surprised by Jesus' discourse on what is required to deepen our relationship with God and want to find out more? One of the crowd? Perhaps a Scribe or a Pharisee? A follower of Jesus? Someone who is not mentioned in the passage?
- Look around you. What do you notice? What is the mood of the people like? Are they still listening attentively? Is there murmuring after Jesus' discourse on the Beatitudes? Have some people left? What is the mood of the crowd as a whole? Why do you stay?

- What about Jesus? Has he remained sitting? What is his mood like? What is his voice like? Does he seem intent at getting his message across?
- When Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth", what is going through your mind? Do you immediately think of the uses for salt – for flavour, as a purifier, or as a preservative? Do you think of how the lack of salt renders food insipid? Do you think of salt as an essential commodity?
- Do you wonder how you can be the salt in the lives of others? How you can be a distinctive seasoning to those you encounter? How, like salt, you can contribute something life giving to those around you? How you can work invisibly, adding flavour and zeal by the way you live your life? Do you wonder how you can keep your flavour and be effective in bringing more taste to the lives of others? What does being the salt of the earth mean for you?
- When Jesus says "You are the light of the world", what is going through your mind? Do you think of how vital light is to help you appreciate the beauty around you, just as it facilitates avoiding dangers? Do you also think that lighting up something is decorative? Do you also see that Jesus is referring to this light as something that reveals truth and life?
- How do you see yourself as a light to others? Could it be that Jesus is asking you to shed light on the problems of the world? That perhaps his message could shine out through you, through your words and actions? Are you surprised that Jesus is confident that you will contribute to the enlightenment of those around you? Do you wonder how you can achieve this?
- Do you see that by living in the spirit of Beatitudes, you can permeate the world with flavour and light? That it calls you to action as opposed to being hidden away?
- What does salt and light mean for you? Can you think of ways you can bring salt and a light to others in a practical way? How do you acknowledge your gifts and use them for others?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, speak to Jesus about what sort of flavouring you would like to be and how you can let your light shine out for others. Ask Jesus to touch your life and show you how your faith can bring flavour and light to yourself and to those around you.

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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