

## Imaginative Contemplation – His face shone like the sun



**Transfiguration (1516–1520) by Raphael - Public Domain Bible Painting**

### 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 alive for us. We are not trying to recreate history. It doesn't matter if my 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 as we listen to and reflect on the Transfiguration of Jesus. Let us follow Jesus up the mountain so that we too can witness the his divinity.

### **Reading      Matthew 17: 1-9**

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone.

There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. "Lord," he said "it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them. With shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him." When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. "Stand up," he said "do not be afraid." And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, "Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

## **Contemplation**

Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent, we read the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is reported in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and this year, Year A of the lectionary, we

hear from the account of St Matthew. Let us join Jesus on the mountain and watch the scene unfold.

- Who are you within the story? Are you Peter, James or John, or an unnoticed bystander? Are you maybe a person or thing that is not specially mentioned in the printed story.
- What time of day is it? What is the atmosphere like? Cool? Hot? Oppressive? Is there a breeze?
- Do you wonder where you are going and what Jesus has in mind? If you are Peter James or John, you wonder why he asked you to join him?
- Are you tired from the walk up the high mountain? What can you see, hear and feel around you as you are walking? What is the location/scenery like? Is the hill steep?
- What are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location that you notice? Are there any animals or vegetation?
- Are you interacting with those around you? Are you walking by yourself, or following at a distance? What are you thinking if walking alone? How is Jesus interacting with his friends or you?
- Where do you stop and what do you do when you stop? What does Jesus do? Does he kneel down to pray?
- How do you feel when you see Jesus being transfigured, his face shining, like the sun and his clothes becoming as white as the light? Are you afraid? Overawed? Is this the confirmation you needed that Jesus was the Son of God, seeing him revealed in his divine glory?
- Do you see two people appearing and talking to Jesus? How do you know they are Moses and Elijah? Why do you think they are there? Do you wonder what their appearance from Israel's history indicate? Could it indicate Jesus' continuity with the Law and the prophets? Listen to what is said and look at the expressions on the disciple's faces. How is Jesus interacting with them?
- What do you do when you hear the sound of God's voice saying "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him."? Can you recall a time when you have been called my beloved son or daughter? How did you feel?

- Do you feel privileged to see Jesus in glory and to recognise that he could be fully present to you and to God? Does Peter voice what you are thinking "Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here? Do you want to stay in this moment forever? Have you ever had a mountain-top experience that you have not wanted to end?
- Do you hear the gentle voice of Jesus saying, "Stand up and do not be afraid? Can you recall a time when you have heard the comforting voice of Jesus?
- What do you discuss as you come down the mountain or are you walking by yourself contemplating the scene?

Talk to Jesus about what you have just seen? Speak to him about the transforming power of prayer

## **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.