

Imaginative Contemplation - The Living water



Living Water - Painting by Sieger Koder

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 savour the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. Let our thirst be quenched by the living water Jesus is offering us.

Reading – John 4:5-42

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Joseph's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied: "If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: 'Give me a drink', you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water."

"You have no bucket, sir," she answered, "and the well is deep: how would you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?"

Jesus replied:

Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again.

but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again; the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life."

"Sir," said the woman, "give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water."

"I see you are a prophet, sir" said the woman. "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said: "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know;

for salvation comes from the Jews.

But the hour will come - in fact it is here already -

When true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth:
that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants.

God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything." "I who am speaking to you," said Jesus, "I am he."

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, "He told me all I have ever done," so, when the Samaritans came up to him they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, "Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world."

Contemplation

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? Are you a central figure e.g. the woman or an unnoticed bystander? Are you 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/scenery like? What are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location that you notice?
- Why have you come to the well? Do you notice Jesus there? How does he look? Tired? Weary? Thirsty? What is going through your mind when you see him speaking to a woman? Breaking from tradition and not only speaking to a lone woman but speaking to an outsider?
- Why do you think that the woman has come to the well by herself? Do you immediately assume that she is a woman of ill repute?
- What most attracted your attention in Jesus' attitude toward the woman during the dialogue? How do Jesus and the woman interact? Do you notice that Jesus starts the conversation with his own need – that he is thirsty? That He does this in such a way that the woman feels needed and she serves Him? That he treats her with dignity and not as someone on the margins of society?

- What most attracted your attention about the attitude of the Samaritan woman during her conversation with Jesus? Do you notice that it is the Samaritan woman who leads the discussion towards religion?
- Is there anything surprising about what Jesus is saying? Are you confused by the words of Jesus or encouraged? Do you realise that the water that Jesus is talking about is symbolic? That the water he is talking about is the Holy Spirit who is the water of baptism?
- If the water is symbolic, could Jesus' thirst also be symbolic? Symbolic of his thirst for his mission to bring us to his Father?
- Look at the expressions on Jesus' and the woman's faces and listen to the tone of their voices as they speak?
- What about the Samaritan villagers who come later? They believe on the testimony of the woman? Would you have believed her testimony? Have you noticed that Jesus chooses the most unlikely people to reveal the Good news to?

Is there anyone you want to engage in conversation? Jesus, to clarify what he just said? The woman to find out her feelings of the interaction? Any of the villagers to find out what they believed?

We will sit with these thoughts and imaginations 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.