

Imaginative Contemplation – Did our hearts not burn within us



Jesus and the two disciples *On the Road to Emmaus*, by [Duccio](#), 1308–1311, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, [Siena](#)

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.

Sit and relax by focussing on your breathing for a few minutes so that you can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

Acknowledge you are in the presence of God by saying the following prayer:

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 guide and enlighten our minds as we read the Gospel and reflect on what it means to have Jesus appear in our midst. Let us pray that we recognise him.

Reading Luke 24: 13-35

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, "What matters are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them called Cleopas, answered him, "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things have been happening there these last few days." "What things?" he asked. "All about Jesus of Nazareth," they answered, "who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing."

Then he said to them, "You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

Then they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if

to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. "It is nearly evening," they said, "and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, "Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread

Contemplation

In today's Gospel, the 3rd Sunday of Easter, we hear of another encounter by the Risen Christ, this time from the Gospel of Luke. Imagine the scene on the road to Emmaus, 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 one of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus? Or one of the disciples assembled together hearing the testimony of these two witnesses? Perhaps a person that is not specially mentioned in the printed story?
- If you are Cleopas or his companion/wife, why are you leaving Jerusalem? What was your relationship to Jesus? How are you feeling? Downcast. sad, grieving because your friend has been crucified/ Do you feel hopeless? Disappointed? In despair? Let down, angry, frustrated, disillusioned because you thought that the Messiah had come to bring freedom from the tyranny of foreign occupation? Do you feel unsure of what to do next?
- What time of day is it? What is the road like you are walking along? What do you notice about the road you are taking?
- What are you discussing as you walk along? Are you trying to make sense of what has just happened? Are you sharing your feelings and grief with one another?
- Do you notice the stranger approaching you? How do you feel when he walks along beside you? Annoyed that he has interrupted your train of thought/conversation? Irritable that he doesn't know the goings on in Jerusalem and asks you to explain? Are you the one who explains or are you the other just listening? Do you feel a sense of importance as you explain the tragic events to someone who appears not to know

what has happened? Do you feel better when you have poured out your story to this stranger who listened attentively?

- What is going through your head as this stranger explains in a different way what has happened and why Christ had to die and gives you a different point of view? Are you all ears? Do the events of the past few days begin to make sense? Do you sometimes become stuck in the factual account and fail to see the bigger picture?
- What was about the stranger that made you invite him in to share your meal? Was it because he lifted your spirits by making sense of the crucifixion of your friend? Was it because he was a good listener? Have there been times in your life when you met fellow traveller who has made you feel better about your situation? Have there been times when you have poured out your soul to a stranger and they have helped you see things in a new light?
- How did you feel when you recognised that it was Jesus in your midst? Why did you not recognise him before the breaking of bread? Do you recognise Jesus accompanying you in the experiences of your life, helping you make sense of what happens?
- What was it that made you hurry back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what had just taken place? What was your conversation like on the way back to Jerusalem?
- What was the reaction of the disciples when you told the story of what took place on the road to Emmaus? Belief? Disbelief?
- Has your heart burned within you as you reflected this Gospel Passage?

Sit and imagine the scene and talk to Jesus. Ask him to show his face in those you walk with in your every day encounters. Ask him to stay with you as "It is nearly evening and the day is almost over.

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.