

Imaginative Contemplation - Father, the Hour has come



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 your 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 your hearts and enlighten your minds as you read the Priestly Prayer of Jesus. As you listen to the words of Jesus, let the Spirit enter you and ask him to allow you to become part of the loving intimacy of Jesus' relationship with God the Father.

Reading John 17:1-11

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

Father, the hour has come:

glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you;

and, through the power over all mankind that you have given him, let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him.

And eternal life is this: to know you, the only one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I have glorified you on earth

and finished the work that you gave me to do.

Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me

with that glory I had with you before ever the world was.

I have made your name known

to the men you took from the world to give me.

They were yours and you gave them to me,

and they have kept your word.

Now at last they know

that all you have given me comes indeed from You

for I have given them the teaching you gave me.

and they have truly accepted this, that I came from you

and have believed that it was you who sent me.

I pray for them;

I am not praying for the world

but for those you have given me

because they belong to you

all I have is yours and all you have is mine,
and in them I am glorified.
I am not in the world any longer but they are in the world
and I am coming to you”

Contemplation

On the seventh Sunday in Easter A, the Gospel Reading from John 17 is also known as Jesus’ Priestly Prayer. This is the third part of a discourse which takes place at the Passover meal, his last Supper. In last week’s Gospel Reading, Jesus has promised that His Father would send the Paraclete to be with them forever. Then as the Passover meal draws to a close, Jesus prays to God the Father for Himself and as the intercessor on behalf of His disciples. So this in mind, imagine the scene, find a place within it. With the help of the Spirit, listen to Jesus’ prayer and notice the feelings his words stir within you.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the disciples? If so, which one? Perhaps a person that is not specially mentioned in the printed story e.g. one of the servers?
- What is the atmosphere like in the “Upper Room”? Do you feel there is despondency in the room because Jesus has told you he will be leaving you? Or is there a lively atmosphere because you are celebrating the Passover meal? Or is there confusion because there is so much happening?
- What is going on in your mind as you watch Jesus lift his eyes to heaven and listen to His prayer addressed so lovingly to His Father? Do you sense the intimacy of the relationship between Jesus and his Father? Are you sad because Jesus says his mission is coming to an end? Comforted because he is praying for himself and you? Are you tired because you have eaten and drank so Jesus’ words are going over your head? Do you feel there is just too much to take in given all has transpired during the meal?
- What do you think is going on in Jesus’ mind as he prays for himself? Do you think he is sad? Afraid? Does his voice sound desperate? Calm? Resolute? Trusting?
- You heard Jesus say many things that relates to the fact he would not be with you much longer. “Father, the hour has come; I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do; I am not in the world any longer but they are in the world and I am coming to you””? Does it make you feel afraid? Do you come to the

realisation that Jesus is actually leaving you? Does Jesus sound as though He does not want to leave you? Do you wonder why he has to leave?

- Jesus also says to the Father that He had finished the work He, the Father had given Him to do. What do you think He means? Do you wonder who will carry on his work?
- How do you feel when you hear Jesus praying lovingly to the Father for you? Comforted? Afraid? Are you wondering why he is praying for you? Do you realise that it is because Jesus is sending you to make both the Father and himself known to the world? How does that make you feel? Overwhelmed? A feeling of mutual trust? Anxious? Do you want to thank him for his prayers and trust in you? What do you want to say to Him?
- Listen to Jesus as he prays to God the Father for Himself and as the intercessor on your behalf. Do you feel privileged that you are part of this intimate conversation between Jesus and his Father? Do you feel you are standing on Holy ground as you listen to Jesus' conversation with his Father?
- Is there anything you want to say to Jesus whose Spirit dwells in your heart? Is there anything you want to ask him?

Sit and imagine the scene and perhaps write down how and what you feel, your emotions – anything that comes into your mind.

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 and Doubleday and Company Ltd