

## Imaginative Contemplation – They were all filled with the Holy Spirit



### 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

As you listen to the account of the Spirit of God coming down on the disciples, allow the same Spirit to come into our hearts and open the horizons of our mind so He too can loosen our tongues to proclaim the Good News.

## **Reading      Acts 2:1-11**

When Pentecost day came round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome- Jews and proselytes alike-Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

## **Contemplation**

Today is the Feast of Pentecost and occurs on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Easter. Let us start our contemplation by setting the scene for this passage in which Saint Luke describes in a very dramatic way this extraordinary event

which changed the lives of all those who were present in the room and those who bore witness. On this Pentecost Day, the Spirit of God entered into the lives of those in that upper room and thus the fire of the Gospel message spread round the Mediterranean world. So with this in mind, imagine the scene in the upper room, 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 disciples in the upper room? Are you one of the women, perhaps even Mary, Mother of Jesus? Perhaps a person that is not specially mentioned in the printed story e.g. one of the servers? Perhaps you were not even in the room. You may have been one of those people outside listening to Peter and his friends proclaiming in different languages that Jesus of Nazareth was the Anointed one of God, the Messiah.
- Going back to the upper room, what is the atmosphere like? Hot and stuffy? Overcrowded? Filled with fear and feeling trapped? Is there a feeling of doubt, mistrust and regret? Full of expectation since you do not know what exactly you are waiting for and when the Advocate will come? Are you there because Jesus instructed you to **“Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high”** Maybe you are recounting stories of your life with Jesus.
- What are you praying for in that upper room? Understanding for what you have to do next? Courage to carry out Jesus’ mission? Perhaps you are praying for a plan. Perhaps you are praying the prayer that Jesus taught you or recalling the last prayer he said for you at your Last Supper together before he was arrested.
- What happens in that upper room when you hear the sound of that powerful wind from heaven which fills the room? Are you afraid? Did you think you are going to die? What do you do?
- How do you feel when you realise you had begun to speak and understand every language present in the crowds around you? Do you realise this is the work of the Advocate you had been waiting for?
- How do you feel in your heart when you realise that the Spirit has empowered you to proclaim the truth to the nations by helping you to overcome your fear and anxiety? That you can now carry out Jesus’ instructions before his Ascension to **‘Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation’**.
- What do you tell the people outside? How do you feel as you are proclaiming this message? Have you ever been nudged by the

Spirit to stand up for the values of the Gospel or do a demanding task because it is the right thing to do?

- If you are one of the people outside what is going through your mind? Astonishment because you hear the disciples speaking in your own tongue, telling of the great works of God? Astounded because they are proclaiming that Jesus who was crucified, lives? Stunned because you had seen these same disciples abandoning and denying Jesus when he was captured and sentenced to death but now they speak with courage and candour?
- Is there anything you want to say to the disciples? Mary? Anyone in the room? Do you want to hear more about the Spirit who gave the disciples the gift of tongues and courage? Who freed them from their fear and doubt? Do you too want that gift of courage so that you too can proclaim that Jesus is risen and lives?

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