

Imaginative Contemplation – Proclaim from the housetops



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 Jesus instructing his disciples, let the Spirit enter you and ask him to help you be aware that these instructions and words of comfort and support are for you too.

Reading Matthew 10:26-33

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows:

“Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows. So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.”

Contemplation

On this the 12th Sunday of Ordinary Time A the Gospel passage comes from Matthew Chapter 10. Jesus is instructing his disciples and is commissioning them to go to “the lost sheep of the House of Israel”. He gives them powers over unclean spirits and sicknesses. He has told them of the difficulties their mission entails, and the twelve are left in no doubt of the dangers they will face, but Jesus then gives them support and tells them not to be afraid. So with this in mind and with the help of the Spirit find a place within the passage and listen to Jesus’ words of encouragement.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the Twelve? Perhaps a passer-by? Or someone else who is not mentioned in the passage or even an inanimate object.
- Where is Jesus giving you these instructions? Are you having a meal together? Are you in someone's house? Are you in the open air? Notice what is happening around you. Is the place quiet or are there distractions around you?
- What is the atmosphere like amongst the group? One of excitement at the thought of going out on your mission? What expressions do those listening to Jesus have on their faces? One of fear of the dangers you face? One of anticipation? What is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus? What is Jesus' voice like? Is he gazing compassionately and encouragingly at you?
- What is your reaction when Jesus tells you not to be afraid? Does it fill you with confidence? Reassurance? Encouragement? Doubt? Fear? Wondering what you have let yourself in for?
- When Jesus says "everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops", what are you thinking? Even although you had been inspired by what Jesus says and does, are you tempted to keep it to yourself? Are you afraid of bringing his teachings into the light? Shouting it from the rooftops? Do you fear the reactions of others that you are being sent to? Or because you are a disciple of Jesus, you do not fear carrying out his mission? What thoughts are going through your mind at this point?
- When Jesus says "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;" did you realise your mission would involve conflict and perhaps injury? That persecution and suffering cannot be avoided? Do you want to continue with your mission? Does Jesus manage to convince you that God has the ultimate power? Or do you think Jesus is exaggerating? Have you experienced difficulties in carrying out the mission Jesus has entrusted to you?
- When Jesus says that God knows every sparrow and that every hair on your head has been counted, how does that make you feel? Comforted in the knowledge that God cares about every life? Comforted in the realisation of God's love for you personally? Reassured that you are significant in God's eyes? Does it make you feel more determined to proceed with the mission Jesus has

for you despite the challenges? Are you still afraid but comforted in the belief that God knows you fully and values you limitlessly? Is there anything you want to ask Jesus? Discuss it with him. Do you want more reassurances? 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