

Imaginative Contemplation – Listen Anyone who has ears



Parable of the Sower – Orthodox Christian Network

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.

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 listen to and reflect on the parable of the sower. Let the Spirit enrich our hearts and minds so that the seed of God's word can be sown within us and take root.

Reading Matthew 13:1-9

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.

He said, "Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!"

Contemplation

In this Gospel passage from St Matthew, on the 15th Sunday in Ordinary time, Jesus tells his listeners how the Word of God is received by using every day analogies to capture the minds of his listeners..He compares his Spiritual Message to seeds being scattered by a sower. This analogy would appeal to many of the listeners because they know the terrain of Palestine. So close your eyes and imagine the scene, find a place within it. With the help of the Spirit, let the Word of God be implanted in your imagination.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the crowds? A passer-by who has stopped to listen? The sower? The seeds? The soil? The pouch carrying the precious seeds? Something that is not mentioned in the passage?
- Notice the terrain. What does it look like? What is the ground like? Is it rocky? Is there much vegetation? Is it as Jesus describes in his parable?

- Notice what is going on around you. Look at the faces of those who are listening. What do you see in them? Attentiveness? Anticipation? Hope? What about the face of Jesus? Does he look compassionate? Is he looking at you?
- As you listen to Jesus do you wonder why he uses parables to teach? Do these parables help you understand the message he is trying to convey about the Kingdom of Heaven? Do you like listening to the parables or do they confuse you and trouble you? Do his analogies to every day life strike a chord with you?
- How do you interpret the parable of the sower?
- Do you understand it to be that the sower is God, the seed is his word and that you are the ground on which the seed falls? Do you identify with the different types of soil? What is the rocky ground in you? Are there areas in your life that God's word does not have a chance to mature and grow? What are the thorns that choke your faith and hope? How do you nurture your faith and that of others? Where do you see the richness that produces a good harvest in your life and in those around you?
- Are you open to receiving these seeds, the word of God? How have you prepared yourself to receive the seeds? What nourishment do you need to help these seeds to grow? Do you need help to uproot the weeds and remove the stones so that your seeds can flourish?
- Perhaps you interpret the parable in another way. That you are the pouch containing the seed, the word of God. If so, are you afraid of letting go your precious contents? Are you afraid of the reception these words may get? Are you afraid that the soil may not be well prepared or deserving of the fruit your seeds have to offer? Do you want to keep these seeds to yourself because you know that the soil can be inhospitable? Do you want to take the chance and let go of your seeds to see what they will become and the harvest they will bear?
- Perhaps you see yourself as the seed. If so, how do you feel about being sown? Are you excited at the thought being planted so that you can bear fruit? Are you excited at being taken out of the dark pouch so that you can feel the warmth of the sun and see the light? Or are you afraid that you are not sown on the right terrain and thus will not bear fruit? Are you afraid of being choked by brambles, being eaten by birds, thrown on stones, not take root so you would rather stay in the pouch? Or do you trust the sower that he will plant you on the right soil at the right time?

- How do you see the sower? Do you see him as generous with his seeds or wasteful? Are you frustrated with him sowing the precious seeds so liberally or are you happy that many of his seeds will bear fruit? Do you see that the sower was not put off by knowing that all the seed would not bear fruit?

Is there anything you would like to say to Jesus about this parable? Speak with Him now about what is going through your mind.

Sit and imagine the scene and how we receive the Word of God.

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.

I would like to share this reflection I found in the St Patrick's Missionary Society Magazine. There was no reference as to its origin but I felt it was appropriate to the Parable of the Sower.

A Gardener's Reflection

First look at the weeds,

weed out gossip, weed out laziness, weed out indifference and weed out pride.

Plant five rows of peas:

patience, peace, promptness, politeness and prayer.

Then plant five rows of lettuce:

let us be faithful, let us be loving, let us be useful, let us be trustful

and let us be grateful.

Then we can turn to the reliable turnips:

turn up on time, turn up with a smile, turn up with a new idea and turn up

with a new determination.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd