

Imaginative Contemplation – Thy Kingdom 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.

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 Jesus explaining the Kingdom of heaven. Let the Spirit enrich our hearts and minds so that we can identify the wheat and darnel in our lives; that we can identify what is life giving and what is life taking.

Reading **Matthew 13:24-30**

Jesus put a parable before the crowds, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servant went to him and said, 'Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?' 'Some enemy has done this,' he answered. And the servant said, 'Do you want us to go and weed it out?' But he said, 'No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.'

In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfil the prophecy:
I will speak to you in parables
and expound things hidden
since the foundation of the world.

Contemplation

This passage from St Matthew's Gospel, the sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, follows on from last week's Gospel reading in which Jesus is describing the Kingdom of heaven in parables, using every day imagery to capture the minds of his listeners. So close your eyes, imagine the scene and find a place within it. Listen to Jesus as he tells us that it is God who makes the final judgement.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the crowd? A passer-by? Something who is not mentioned in the passage?
- What is the terrain like? Is it rocky? Is there soil? Is it as Jesus describes in his parable? Do you think this is why Jesus chose this spot to tell his parable? So that his listeners could better understand it? Do you enjoy listening to the parables of Jesus? Do they stretch your imagination? Make you think? For you do they make moral ideas easier to engage with? Do you know the the prophesy regarding Jesus speaking in parables (Psalm 78)?
- 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? Understanding? Confusion? What about the face of Jesus? Does he look compassionate? What is his voice like? Loud? Engaging? Mesmerising?
- When Jesus starts this parable with “The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...” do you first think he is talking about the afterlife? Some other out of this world existence? Are you surprised when he compares the Kingdom of Heaven to the “here and now”? To every day living: a farmer planting his seeds? What is going through your mind?
- Does the Parable of the sower with the wheat and the darnel captures your imagination? Why?
- Does it surprise you that farmer wants the wheat and the weeds to grow side by side? Do you envisage God as the farmer? Do you think the parable means that you are expected to live side by side with a whole spectrum of people who perhaps do not share your vision of God? That Jesus is warning you not to judge others as God is the one who will make the final judgement?
- Or do you think it means that each one of us is a mixture of good seeds and weeds and that we must learn to be patient and tolerant with our weaknesses so that the good wheat, our strengths can flourish? Are you grateful to Jesus for allowing you to see clearly the patience of God who trusts that the wheat will flourish despite the darnel?
- Does it trouble you that the wheat and the darnel (good and bad) can co-exist? That the darnel can compete with the wheat for vital nutrients? Do you think this is life-giving or life-draining? Do you see that Jesus is asking you to be patient and tolerant by allowing God to work in your life? That he is asking you to have the patience and the tolerance to live with good and bad? To have faith in God to make the final judgement.

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart as you imagine the kingdom of heaven here and now. Ask Jesus to help you make the right choices in life so that you can give rise to the good within you.

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.

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