

Imaginative Contemplation – Whoever receives you, receives me



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 enter our hearts and enlighten our minds to the difficult path we must follow in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

Reading Matthew 10:37-42

Jesus said to his apostles: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple - amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.

Contemplation

On this the 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time A the Gospel passage is the conclusion of the preparatory instructions Jesus is giving his disciples prior to sending them out to help him with his mission. In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples in no uncertain terms the conditions of discipleship. Let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus tell us about the cost and rewards of being a disciple.

- 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? Excitement? Enthusiasm? What is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus? What is Jesus' voice like? Is he gazing encouragingly at you?
- When Jesus says "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;", how does that make you feel? Do you find these words challenging and harsh as you try to understand them? After all isn't the Jesus you have come to know full of love for everyone? What about the next sentence "whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me."? How do you react to these seemingly strong words?
- As you digest these statements, do you then realise that Jesus is saying that commitment to God is all or nothing? That discipleship is not half hearted? That if you want to be part of Jesus' mission you must give yourself completely and unconditionally? That being a disciple is not a marginal aspect of your life, it is central?
- As these words of Jesus sink in, how do you feel about being fully committed to discipleship? Does the price of discipleship sound like sacrifice and suffering to you? Do you have too many disordered attachments that prevent you from being totally committed to Jesus' mission? Are you excited and charged with renewed energy at the thought of being a disciple of Jesus?
- Do you feel assured that Jesus also promises that the small efforts you make in following him will be rewarded? That even something small like giving a cup of water to someone will have it's reward? Are you encouraged that you are not being asked to do something beyond your capability? That as long as you offer hospitality to others, then you are offering hospitality to God himself?
- Look around at your companions again? What is their reaction now? What are they saying? Do you think you and they feel ready for this challenging commitment? Do you hope they are because you want to be part of this group of disciples? Would you like the opportunity to serve others in small ways?

Spend some time talking to Jesus about what you find demanding about discipleship, about what is holding you back from total commitment to his mission. Ask him what he wants of you.

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