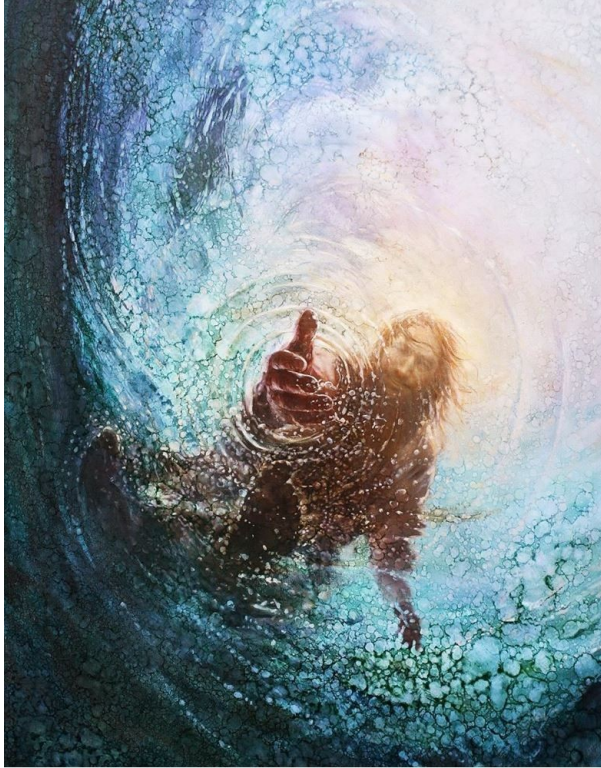


Imaginative Contemplation – Do not be afraid



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 mind as we push the boat out into unknown waters. Let the Spirit be with you so that you do not take our eyes off Jesus amidst the storms of your life. Ask the Spirit to help you see that Jesus is not only in the security of our boat but also in the storms that surround it.

Reading Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a headwind.

In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

It was Peter who answered. "Lord," he said, "if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." "Come," said Jesus.

Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. "Lord! Save me!" he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. "Man of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, "Truly, you are the Son of God"

Contemplation

Today's Gospel reading, the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, follows on from the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus has sent away the crowds and now he sends his apostles away in the boat so that he can go away by himself for spiritual sustenance. Let us enter the boat with the apostles and experience their fear of going into unknown waters.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples if so which one? Perhaps someone not mentioned in the story. Perhaps you are yourself.
- What time of day is it? What is the weather like? Hot? Cold? Clammy? Is there a breeze to warn you of the gathering storm clouds? Do you suspect that a storm may be brewing?
- How many are in the boat? What is the mood like? Are you grumbling amongst yourselves because Jesus has gone off alone? Do you feel abandoned by him? Would you rather have stayed with Jesus or do you understand that Jesus needs time by himself to perhaps pray and renew his strength?
- What happens when the storm comes? Are you afraid because you can't seem to battle against the wind? Do you feel out of control? Do you blame Jesus, thinking that if he was there, this would not be happening?
- Does Jesus seem distant to you when trials and hardships come your way? Do you look for Jesus when you encounter difficulty or challenges? Why? Is it because you feel he would know what to do? Have you come to rely on Jesus' strength and help to get you out of turbulent situations? Did you really think that although Jesus went off by himself to pray, he had taken his eyes off you? Did you think about calling out and asking for his help?
- Who do you think is coming towards you, walking on water amidst the storm? Are you even more afraid? What are you feeling?
- When the voice says "Courage. Do not be afraid. It is I" Do you realise it is the voice of Jesus? Do you hear his calm voice amidst the turbulence of the waves? Do you feel reassured? Does the voice give you courage? Have you ever heard that calm, reassuring voice amidst the turbulence of your life?
- What do you make of Peter saying "If it is you, Lord tell me to come to you?" When Jesus said "Come" are you afraid for Peter as you watch him walking on water to Jesus or do you wish you had Peter's courage to step out of the boat where you feel more secure and walk out into the storm towards Jesus? Could this invitation also be for you too?
- What happens when you answer Jesus' invitation to come? Do you put your trust in Jesus? Do you feel courageous, that nothing could harm you? What does it feel like to walk on water? Why do you begin to sink? Is it because you begin to doubt? Is it because you take your eyes off Jesus? Is your fear too much in this hostile

environment? What does Jesus do when you call on him to save you?

- When Jesus put his hand out to steady you, to support you, how did you feel? Do you feel secure knowing that Jesus is not in the boat but in the midst of the storm? Do you feel that in order to go out to meet him, you must leave the security of the boat in spite of the dangers? Do you feel that all you need is trust in Jesus' helping hand and faith in God's love for us?
- Jesus and Peter walk back to the boat together, the storm abates and peace ensues. What is going on in your mind? Do you too bow down before Jesus saying "Truly, you are the Son of God". How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus is the Son of God?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart. Ask him to help you have faith in him to leave the security of the boat, to go out into the storm to find him there and to trust that he will be there to give you a helping hand.

Let us now spend 10 minutes reflecting on the our feelings as we are engulfed by the storm.

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 and Doubleday and Company Ltd