

## Imaginative Contemplation – When two or three meet in my name...



### 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 so that when we gather together in Jesus' name we can feel his presence among us.

## Reading      **Matthew 18:15-20**

Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother does something wrong go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.."

I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them."

## Contemplation

This Gospel Reading on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A comes in the middle of Jesus's preaching on the importance of community. We enter the scene as he tells us how to respond if someone in the community commits an offence. So let us listen to Jesus' instructions.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? A passer-by? Someone eavesdropping into the conversation between Jesus and his disciples? Someone who is not mentioned in the passage?
- Where is Jesus talking to you? Are you in the open air? If so where? Are there many people around/ Or are you sitting indoors around a table, just the disciples and Jesus?
- Notice what is going on around you. Notice the expressions on the faces of those listening. What is the mood like?
- Are you surprised with Jesus' instructions regarding what to do if your brother wrongs you? To have it out between yourselves in

private? Does it make you wonder how you react when you feel wronged by someone? Do you try to make things right with them with kindness and respect or do you snub them? Do you take them aside in private or do you complain to others about them? Do you try to heal your broken relationship or do you even make an attempt?

- How would you feel if you are the wrong doer? Would you want to be told by your friend that you had hurt them? Or would you rather be told by someone else?
- What if someone you know has wronged the community in which you live? Do you feel responsible for them or do you think you are not their keeper and ignore the situation? Do you feel it has nothing to do with you or do you try to bring them back into the fold again? If so how do you go about doing it or would you go to someone higher up the chain so that you don't have to get involved? Do you feel you would be interfering if you approached the wrongdoer?
- Are you surprised when Jesus reminds you that you are part of a community and thus have responsibility for one-another? Have you ever thought that your actions could affect the community in which you live? Your friends you go around with? Your community of disciples? Do you realise that by approaching the wrongdoer you are supporting him and helping him to goodness?
- Are you surprised at the extent Jesus is asking you to go to try and change the heart of the wrongdoer? In your mind, is it worth going to all that bother? Would you rather leave it to someone else? Would you rather not rock the boat? What does it mean to you to forgive and forget?
- Are you surprised when Jesus tells you that the decision of the community has God's backing, i.e. whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven? Do you understand that it is the importance of reconciliation and not punishment that is Jesus' objective?
- Do you feel reassured when Jesus tells you that if two or three of you gather in his name, he will be there among you?

Let us now spend 10 minutes by speaking to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart as you contemplate Jesus' instructions regarding bringing a wrongdoer back into the fold.

## **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