

Imaginative Contemplation – He went off to a lonely place

Mt



Athos, Healing Peter's Mother-in-Law (public domain)

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 our faith, like that of Jesus' shines through in the midst of the difficulties of everyday life. We pray that, like Jesus, we have the eyes to see what needs to be done and have the strength and conviction to go and do it.

Reading Mark 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straight away. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was.

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.

Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you'. He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came'. And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.

Contemplation

In last Sunday's Gospel, we saw Jesus beginning His ministry – a mission of healing and teaching. In this Sunday's Gospel, the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, we see Jesus going straight from the Sabbath service in the synagogue to the house of Simon and Andrew where he continues his healing ministry. Let us enter the scene and watch as Jesus

heals Simon's mother-in-law and then the many sick who were brought to Him.

- Who are you in the passage? Are you James or John, Simon or Andrew? Are you Simon's mother-in-law? Perhaps someone who followed Him from the synagogue? Perhaps a sick person who came to him for healing? Maybe an on-looker?
- Do you go with Jesus, James and John to the house of Simon and Andrew? Have you been invited to participate in a Sabbath meal? Do you know that Simon's mother-in-law is ill?
- Do you witness Jesus curing Simon's mother-in-law? How do those who are present react? How does Simon's mother-in-law react? Do you notice that she starts to serve with joy? Do you too help with the serving?
- Does Jesus manage relax during the meal and in the afternoon? What do you talk about? What is the atmosphere like? Look around you at those those present at the meal. What are their expressions like?
- How do you feel when you see the sick crowding round the door of Simon's house at sun-down? How do you react? Do you want to send them away because there are too many? Because they are interrupting your private time with Jesus? How does Jesus react to the large number of ill people?
- Do you feel compassion for these people knowing that they are marginalised and excluded from the community because of their ailments? Do you want to give them some refreshments because they are sick? Or are you afraid you may catch some disease from them?
- Watch Jesus as he heals the people. What expression does he have on his face? What do you notice as he touches them and cures them?
- Do you notice Jesus leaving long before dawn? Do you follow him? Do you wonder why he needs to have time alone to pray? Or do you understand that he needs to renew his physical and spiritual energy? Perhaps you are surprised that Jesus feels the need to pray. What is the look on his face as he prays? Do you sit and pray with him? Do you exchange any words or even glances?
- What is the atmosphere like as you pray? Is it peaceful? Do you hear birds singing in the early dawn? What do you smell? What do you see?
- Is the peace of the dawn interrupted as his disciples come looking for Jesus? What is their reaction when Jesus tells them that he

wants to go elsewhere because other people also need him? Do you feel his sense of urgency to spread the Word of God? What about you? Would you rather stay where you are because you are familiar with the people and the location? Or are you excited about moving on?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, let us ask Jesus to help us be available for those in need, to help us be generous with our time and also help us to spend some quality time with God so that we can be discerning regarding our priorities.

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