

Imaginative Contemplation – They left their nets and followed him

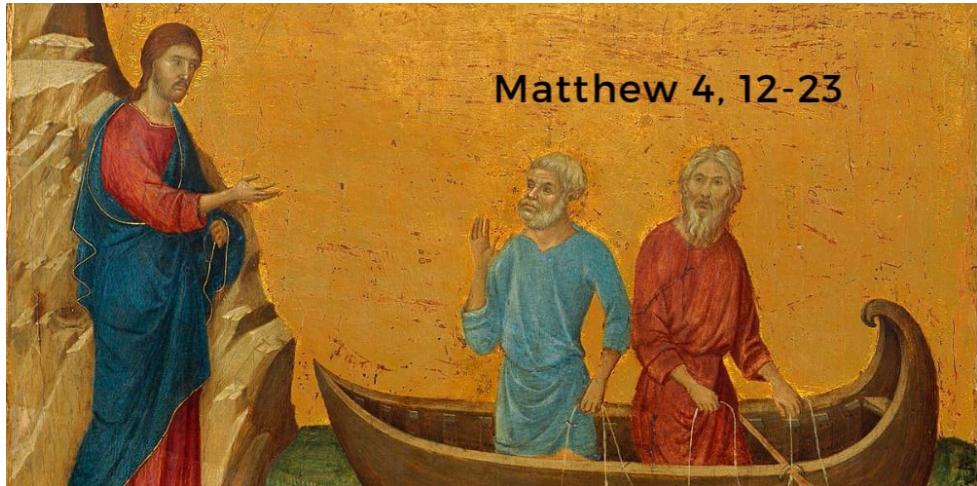


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Introduction

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 we can hear the call of Jesus in our every day lives and have the courage to follow him.

Reading Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.'

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Contemplation

In today's Gospel reading, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary time A, we see Jesus starting his ministry having been baptised in the Jordan by John and then goes on to call his first disciples. So let us enter the scene, listen to Jesus teaching and watch him call his first disciples.

- Who are you in the passage? One of the fishermen? Andrew, Simon Peter, James or John? A bystander? Yourself?
- Take some time to take in the surroundings. Picture the Sea of Galilee, the fishing boats, the fishermen, the terrain, the path leading to the shore.
- Listen to the sounds, the lapping water against the shore, the cry of the gulls, the shouts of the fishermen.

- What smells, and other details about the location do you notice? Perhaps the smell of the air, the feel of the sun on your face, the cool air on your cheeks etc.
- Watch Jesus as he approaches. Notice everything you can about him – what he's wearing, how tall he is, the expression on his face. Do you catch his eye?
- Do you know Jesus? Have you already encountered him? Have you heard him preach? Do you already have a sense of what Jesus is about?
- What does Jesus' voice sound like when he tells you to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand"? How do you respond?
- Notice where Jesus meets his disciples, in their every day life doing their every day jobs. Where does he meet you?
- Jesus looks at you and says "Follow Me". How do you respond? What are your thoughts, your hopes, your worries, your fears? What does it mean for you to follow the call of Jesus, to be with him, to get to know him better? Is there something about Jesus' invitation that intrigues you? Excites you?
- Do you wonder what being a fisher of people could mean? How does this resonate? Are you ready to cast away the nets that are limiting your freedom to go into the unknown? Are you ready to step out of the "boat" of security that you are comfortable in?
- What about your friends and family? What do they think about you giving up everything to be a "fisher of men"? Do they understand? What do you tell them?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, take time to discern where Jesus is inviting you to follow him. Talk to him about what his call means for you today. Ask him to help you to have the freedom and courage to follow his call and to be ready to go wherever he is asking you to go.

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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