

Imaginative Contemplation – This is my beloved Son



Baptism of Jesus – Elizabeth Wang – Picture from the World Wide Web

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 too can emerge from the waters changed in the knowledge that that we, like Jesus, can hear the voice of God saying to us "This is my Beloved; my favour rests on him."

Reading Matthew 3:13-17

At that time: Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'

Contemplation

Today's Feast, The Baptism of Our Lord, heralds the end of the of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It marks the transition from Jesus' hidden life to that of His public ministry. This feast also marks the third time Jesus' divinity has become apparent. The first being when the Angels announced his birth to the shepherds, the second being when His birth was revealed to the Magi by a star. With this in mind, let us too witness this revelation as we enter the scene at the Jordan.

- Who are you in the passage? John the Baptist? One of the crowd? Yourself? Perhaps someone or something not mentioned in the passage.?
- Imagine yourself with Jesus in the crowd waiting to be baptised by John. Take time as you are waiting to picture the scene around you. What time of day is it? What is the atmosphere like? Cool? Hot? Oppressive? Is there a breeze?

- Look at the terrain. What is the scenery like? Is there vegetation or is it arid? Is the terrain flat or steep?
- Feel the soil on your feet. Feel the air around you. What is the weather like? What is the River Jordan like? Is it fast-flowing or calm?
- What are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location that you notice?
- Are there lots of people listening to John? Is there an orderly queue waiting to be baptised by John?
- As you watch those being baptised by John, take time to reflect on why you have come. Do you think that John might be the Christ? Do you expect to feel different when you emerge from the cleansing waters?
- Take notice of John in conversation with Jesus in the water. Listen closely to what they are saying to each other. Do you wonder why John is reluctant to baptise Jesus? Do you suddenly have a feeling of expectancy?
- After John baptises Jesus, notice Jesus turn towards you and invite you into the water to be baptised. Imagine your feet in the water. What does it feel like? Feel the water washing over your body as John baptises you.
- Imagine receiving the Holy Spirit. Feel the Spirit resting on you. Is this the first time you have felt the Spirit of God bring new life in you? What does it feel like? Has it given you energy to start something new?
- Hear the voice coming from heaven saying 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased? What is your reaction to what you have heard? Do you believe you are a son or daughter of God? If not what are the things that are stopping you from doing so?
- How might God be calling you to bring his message to others?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation speak to Jesus about your experience. Talk to him about your own baptism, and how through it, you are being introduced to the world as a child of God and that same Spirit which descended on Jesus will be there to guide you in your mission.

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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