

Imaginative Contemplation – You are the Light of the World



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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 be the salt of the earth and light of the world in our words and deeds.

Reading Matthew 5:13-16

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'

Contemplation

Today's Gospel reading, the 5th Sunday in Ordinary time, directly follows on from last week's Gospel in which through the Beatitudes Jesus tells us that our relationship with God goes beyond the keeping of the ten commandments. Let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus as he goes on to describe this life of discipleship by using every day commodities of salt and light.

- Who are you in the passage? One of his disciples? One of the crowd? A bystander? Yourself?
- How long have you been listening to Jesus or have you just arrived? What time of day is it?
- Take some time to take in the surroundings. Visualise the hillside where Jesus is teaching. Is it a grassy slope or a rocky outcrop? Is there much vegetation; trees, plants, bushes?
- Look at the people around you. Look at the expressions on their faces. What do you notice? Is there murmuring after Jesus' discourse on the Beatitudes? Have some people left? What is the mood of the crowd as a whole?

- Where are you in the crowd? In the front? Middle? On the margins?
- Listen to the sounds, the birds, the voices of the crowd, perhaps chatting to each other, the breeze rustling the leaves.
- Feel the warmth of the sun and the air on your face. Feel the texture of the ground where you are standing or sitting.
- What smells, and other details about the location do you notice? Perhaps the smell of the air, the colour of the sky, the presence of clouds etc.
- Are you surprised by Jesus' discourse on what is required to deepen our relationship with God. Do you want to find out more? What is it about Jesus that makes you want to stay?
- Watch Jesus: Notice His expression. Has He remained sitting with authority or is he now leaning in with warmth? Listen to the tone of His voice as He speaks directly to you:
- "You are the salt of the earth", what is going through your mind? Taste the Salt: Imagine the sharp, life-giving flavor of salt. Reflect on how it preserves and seasons and purifies. Ask yourself: How are you bringing "flavor" or preservation to the world around you right now? Who brings rich flavour to your life? What does being the salt of the earth mean for you?
- When Jesus says "You are the light of the world", Imagine the light: Picture a city on a hill at dusk, its lights visible for miles. Or see a small lamp being placed on a stand, filling a dark room. What is going through your mind?
- Feel the warmth of the light: Sense the light of Christ reflecting off you. How do you see yourself as a light to others? Who is a light in your life?
- Imagine yourself living in the spirit of Beatitudes and how you can permeate the world with flavour and light. Reflect on how this calls you to action as opposed to being hidden away?
- What does salt and light mean for you? Can you think of ways you can bring salt and a light to others in a practical way?

As we spend 10 minutes in quiet contemplation, speak to Jesus about areas of your life that feel "insipid" or where you fear losing your "saltiness". Ask him where you are hiding your light and how you can be more luminous? Ask Jesus to touch your life and show you how your faith can bring flavour and light to yourself and to those around you.

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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