

Imaginative Contemplation – He is risen



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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 alive for us. We are not trying to recreate history. It doesn't matter if my 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 like the women at the tomb, can encounter Jesus and hear him saying to us, "Do not be afraid".

Reading Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.' So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'

Contemplation

All four Gospels recount the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. These accounts differ slightly depending on who the narrative is meant for. However what the Resurrection stories do have in common are that the tomb was found empty and the Risen Christ appeared to certain people. Let us enter St Matthew's narrative which is read at the Easter Vigil this year and watch the scene unfold as he appears to Mary of Magdala and the other Mary.

- Who are you within the story? Are you Mary of Magdala? The other Mary? One of the terrified guards? The angel? A silent observer? Perhaps something or someone not mentioned in the written story.

- Imagine the dim light of early morning and the silhouettes of the two Marys walking toward the tomb. What is the dawn like? What is the climate like? What is the atmosphere like? Is it full of grief, confusion or even anger? What can you see, hear and feel around you? What sounds, smells, and the other details about the location do you notice?
- Imagine you are walking with Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to the tomb in the pre-dawn light. Feel the cool air and the tension of the Sabbath ending.
- Why do you go to the tomb? How does your heart feel? Heavy with grief? Filled with sorrow? Do you feel angry or confused that Jesus allowed himself to be taken without defending himself? Do you feel he deserted you when there was so much more to learn from him?
- Do you notice the soldiers guarding the tomb? What are they doing? Are they sleeping? Are they chatting to one another? Perhaps they are around a campfire talking in low voices.
- Feel the heavy silence of the morning suddenly shattered by a violent earthquake. Feel the ground trembling beneath your feet and the rush of air as an angel, appearing like lightning, descends from heaven. What happens next? Watch the guards shaking with such terror that they become like "dead men".
- How do you react to the earthquake? Imagine your shock when you see the angel rolling back the stone of the tomb. How do the soldiers react? Imagine their shock?
- How do you react when you hear the angel speaking to you? Are you comforted when he says "Do not be afraid?" When the angel assures you that Jesus "has been raised just as he said", how do you feel? Overjoyed? Frightened? Disbelief because you saw him die? Experience the overwhelming mixture of fear and "great joy" as you hear the message: "He is not here; he has been raised".
- Do you go and look inside the tomb as the angel instructed? How do you feel when you see the empty tomb? Joy at realising that Jesus' promise to rise on the third day was actually true? Does what Jesus said during the past three years begin to make sense to you? That the horrific events in Jerusalem was not his end but a beginning? Perhaps nothing that Jesus had said could have prepared you for the reality of the Resurrection.
- Experience the emotion as the women run to tell the disciples. Notice the unique blend of "fear and great joy" in your own heart. Imagine walking fast to tell the disciples, only to have Jesus appear directly in front of you. How do you feel? Are you overjoyed with his words of comfort and kneel down to worship him? Is there anything you want to

say to him? Imagine the sensation of falling at His feet and grasping them. Feel the reality of His physical, resurrected body.

- Listen to Jesus saying, "Do not be afraid," and instructing you to take the message of his resurrection to his brothers, guiding them toward the new beginning in Galilee.
- Jesus promises to meet His followers in their ordinary, everyday lives in Galilee. Do you too want to go to Galilee and encounter the risen Christ in your ordinary life, amidst things that are familiar to you? How do you feel about Jesus calling you brother? Do you feel he now trusts you to carry on his mission?

Speak to the Risen Christ about opportunities that you can encounter him in your every day life in your family, in your community, in your prayer time, in nature.

We will sit with our thoughts and imagination for 10 minutes

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.