

Imaginative Contemplation – I will not leave you orphans



Image 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.

Sit and relax by focussing on your breathing for a few minutes so that you can contemplate the Gospel using your imagination.

Prayer

Acknowledge you are in the presence of God by saying the following prayer:

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 guide our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we will come to the knowledge that it is through the Spirit that God's love will be revealed to us.

Reading John 14:15-21

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.'

'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.'

Contemplation

The Gospel of the 6th Sunday of Easter is a continuation of last week's Gospel reading in which Jesus is speaking to his disciples at the Last Supper. In this passage, Jesus is giving his disciples encouragement and reassures them that although he will soon be leaving them, he will not abandon them. Imagine the intimate, perhaps tense, atmosphere of the Last Supper and enter into the scene.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the disciples? Perhaps a person that is not mentioned in the printed story e.g. one of the servers?
- What about the atmosphere in the "Upper Room". Imagine it being late at night in a lamp-lit room. The air is heavy with the scent of the Passover meal and the collective anxiety and confusion of the disciples. How do you feel?
- Listen to the low murmur of voices, the flickering of the oil lamps, and the quiet intensity of Jesus' voice as He leans in to speak.

- Imagine where you are sitting with the others. Are you close enough to Jesus to see face? What is his expression? One of love? One of exhaustion?
- Watch Jesus as he says “If you love me you will keep my commandments”. Notice that it is not an order, but a tender request for how you can show your love for Him. How do you feel when He links love to obedience? Do you feel a desire to respond to His invitation?
- Reflect on the connection between loving Jesus and keeping his commandments, which is characterized by love for others and experiencing the indwelling of the Father and Son.
- When Jesus says he shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you for ever, what is going through your mind? Can you visualize the Holy Spirit as "another Helper" called alongside to support, comfort, and guide you in continuing Jesus' work? What areas in your life do you need a Helper?
- Reflect on times you have experienced this "Spirit of truth" in your life—perhaps through peace, comfort, or guidance in love. How does that make you feel?
- Do you feel comforted when Jesus tells you he will not leave you orphans? Do you feel reassured that Jesus is aware of the impact that his physical loss will have on you when he tells you that he will send his Spirit to be with you for ever? Are there are areas of your life in which you feel lost or alone?
- Focus on the verse, "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you". Contemplate this mutual indwelling as a home where God dwells within you. How do you feel when Jesus promises a sense of belonging to Him and the Father?
- Are you comforted when Jesus tells you that when he leaves, you will not have to go it alone but you can show yourself to God who promises to help you and send you his Spirit? How do you feel when you hear his words “anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him”?
- Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus' words. Is there anything you want to ask him? Anything you want him to explain?

Jesus turns His gaze specifically toward you. He promises to reveal Himself to those who love Him. What do you want to say to Him in this moment?

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.