

## Imaginative Contemplation – They were all filled with the Holy Spirit



The descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and Mary at Pentecost - Elizabeth Wang

### 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

As we listen to the account of the Spirit of God coming down on the disciples, allow the same Spirit to come into our hearts and open the horizons of our mind so He too can loosen our tongues to proclaim the Good News.

## **Reading      Acts 2:1-11**

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the Apostles were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians — we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.'

## **Contemplation**

Today is the Feast of Pentecost and occurs on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Easter. Let us start our contemplation by setting the scene for this passage in which Saint Luke describes in a very dramatic way this extraordinary event which changed the lives of all those who were present in the room and those who bore witness. So with this in mind, imagine the scene in the

upper room, find a place within it. With the help of the Spirit, let the story unfold in your imagination.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the disciples in the upper room? Are you one of the women, perhaps even Mary, Mother of Jesus? Perhaps a person that is not specifically mentioned in the printed story e.g. one of the servers?
- Imagine the quiet, perhaps tense, or expectant atmosphere in the room where Jesus' followers (men and women) are gathered, waiting as he instructed.
- Visualize the room—is it small, crowded, or large? Where are you in this room? Who are you with? Feel the anticipation, smell the air, and hear the murmurs of prayer.
- Notice the faces of those around you—perhaps, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Peter, or John. Are they praying, talking in low voices, or sitting in expectant silence?
- Listen to the muffled sounds of the busy city outside—the festival crowds arriving for Pentecost. Inside, hear the steady breathing or quiet murmurs of the believers.
- What is the atmosphere like? Is the air still and stuffy, or is there a cool breeze? Notice the tension or peace in your own body as you wait for the "Advocate" Jesus promised.
- Suddenly a noise like a violent, rushing wind fills the entire house. Do you feel the vibration in the floor? Does it startle you, or do you feel a surge of energy?
- Look around as "tongues as of fire" appear and come to rest on everyone. Notice the light reflecting in the eyes of those near you. How does it feel to have this "fire" rest on you—is it warm, or is it a purely spiritual sensation? Feel the presence of the Holy Spirit filling you, bringing peace and courage.
- You find yourself speaking "of the mighty acts of God," but the words feel different in your mouth. You are speaking languages you never learned. Feel the joy and the sudden loss of fear.
- How do you feel when you realise you had begun to speak and understand every language present in the crowds around you? Do you realise this is the work of the Advocate you had been waiting for?
- How do you feel in your heart when you realise that the Spirit has empowered you to proclaim the truth to the nations by helping you to overcome your fear and anxiety? That you can now carry out

Jesus' instructions before his Ascension to '**Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation**'.

- Imagine stepping outside. You see a bewildered crowd from every nation—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and more. Watch their faces turn from confusion to amazement as they hear their own native tongues. What do you tell them? How do you feel as you are proclaiming this message? Consider how the Spirit is empowering you to speak God's "marvels" to the world today.
- Is there anything you want to say to the disciples? Mary? Anyone in the room? Do you want to hear more about the Spirit who gave the disciples the gift of tongues and courage? Who freed them from their fear and doubt? Do you too want that gift of courage so that you too can proclaim that Jesus is risen and lives?

Speak to Jesus and tell him how it feels to receive the Holy Spirit. Tell him about the fears in your life and ask him how it can be transformed into boldness.

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.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd