

Imaginative Contemplation – Do not Fear

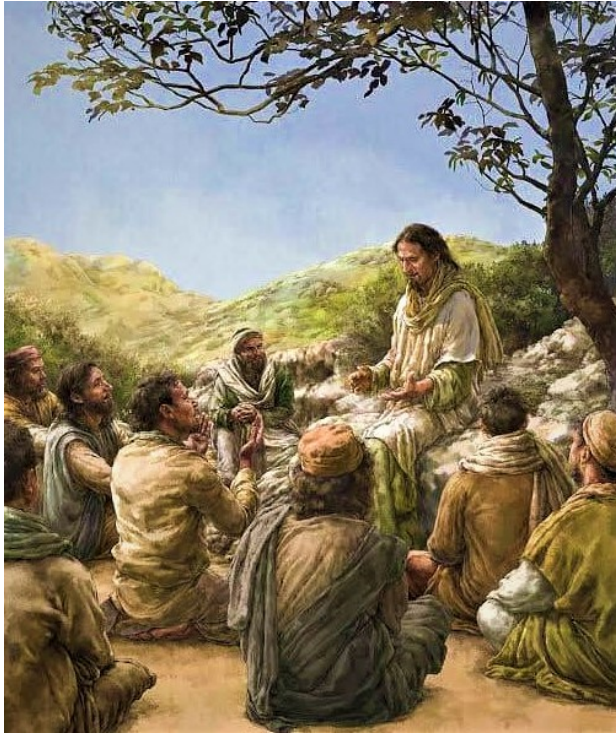


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Introduction

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.

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 you listen to Jesus instructing his disciples, let the Spirit enter you and ask him to help you be aware that these instructions and words of comfort and support are for you too.

Reading Matthew 10:26-33

At that time: Jesus instructed his Apostles:

‘Have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father knowing. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.’

Contemplation

On this the 12th Sunday of Ordinary Time A, listen to Jesus as he gives his disciples support and tells them not to be afraid. With the help of the Spirit find a place within the passage and listen to Jesus’ words of encouragement.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of the Twelve? Perhaps a passer-by? Or someone else who is not mentioned in the passage or even an inanimate object.
- Imagine you are sitting with Jesus and the disciples. Where is Jesus giving you these instructions? Are you on a quiet, dusty hillside looking out over the Sea of Galilee, or perhaps huddled in a

clearing under the shade of olive trees? Are you having a meal together? Are you in someone's house?

- Notice what is happening around you. Notice the texture of the ground, the distant landscape, the colours of the sky. Is the place quiet or are there distractions around you?
- What do you hear? Perhaps a gentle breeze rustling the leaves, the distant chatter of a crowd, or perhaps a bird singing nearby.
- What is the atmosphere like amongst the group? One of peace because of their warmth and friendship? One of excitement at the thought of going out on your mission?
- What expressions do those listening to Jesus have on their faces? One of fear of the dangers you face? One of anticipation? What is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus?
- Look closely at Jesus. What is Jesus' voice like? Is he gazing compassionately and encouragingly at you? What is his posture and expression as he addresses you?
- Look into Jesus' eyes and listen to the sound of his voice as he tells you "Have no fear, (your name)" What is your reaction when he says this?
- Reflect on any fears that you may be holding onto; perhaps relating to your health or that of a loved one, relating to the state of the wider world over which you feel powerless e.g. the devastation of war; environmental destruction; poverty and inequality.
- When Jesus says "everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops", what are you thinking? Even although you are inspired by what Jesus says and does, are you tempted to keep it to yourself? Are you afraid of bringing his teachings into the light? Shouting it from the rooftops? What is it that you fear or are keeping hidden?
- When Jesus says "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;" how do you feel? Have you ever experienced difficulties in carrying out the mission Jesus has entrusted to you?
- When Jesus says that God knows every sparrow and that every hair on your head has been counted, what feelings or memories does this stir within you regarding your worth? Are you reassured that you are significant in God's eyes? Perhaps you might notice some birds perched on the branches. Ponder the depth of God's knowledge of you – he who knows and values every hair on your

head. How do you respond to such limitless love and understanding?

Is there anything you want to ask Jesus? Discuss it with him. Do you want more reassurances? Tell Him honestly about the things that cause you to fear, worry, or hide your faith in your daily life. Listen to how He responds to you. What comfort or reassurance is He offering you in this moment?

Let us now spend 10 minutes in the company of Jesus.

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.