

Imaginative Contemplation – My yoke is easy and my burden is light



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 in a moment of intimacy with His Father revealing the type of people who have received his message, let the Spirit enter you to give you the grace to be one of those children and to respond with trust to Jesus' gentle invitation to give you rest.

Reading Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Contemplation

On this the 14th Sunday of Ordinary time, the Gospel passage comes from Matthew Chapter 11 in which Jesus continues to deepen our understanding of what it means to be his disciple. So with the help of the Spirit, place yourself in the story and listen to Jesus thanking his Father for his followers, those faithful people with whom he keeps company and embrace Jesus' desire to shoulder their weariness and give them, his children, an insight to his message.

- 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?
- Where are you listening to Jesus? Are you out in an open space? Are you sitting with the group of disciples? Or are you passing by and you stop to listen and perhaps rest a while?
- Perhaps you visualise a peaceful, natural outdoor setting—perhaps a quiet hillside by the Sea of Galilee or a shady spot under an old olive tree. Picture Jesus sitting on a rock, looking out over the water.
- Notice what is going on around you. Watch the crowds milling about in the distance—the merchants carrying heavy loads, the religious leaders debating, the weary travellers. Look at the faces of those who are listening. What do you see in them? Weariness? Tiredness? Anticipation? Hope?
- What about the face of Jesus? Is he looking at you? Do you think he recognizes the physical, emotional, or spiritual burdens you have been carrying lately? Look at the warmth and compassion in his eyes.
- When Jesus exclaimed “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children”, what is going through your mind? What do you think he means? Does his words give you encouragement that his message is for you, even though you do not feel learned?
- When Jesus praises his Father and reveals his unique and loving relationship with him, how do you feel? Do you also desire this unique relationship with God, one of love and trust?
- When Jesus invites you to come to him and rest and he will carry your burdens. What is going through your mind? What burdens would you like to unload? Are you weary and tired? Perhaps you carrying the heavy burdens of failure, pain, loss, shame, guilt, depression, hopelessness, or anxiety? Do the Scribes, Pharisees, your employer, those in power, those who think they know better, add to your burdens? Are you weary from the struggles and disappointments life brings you?
- What do you think it would be like to carry your burdens with Jesus’ help? What difference does it make to you when Jesus helps you to carry your burdens? Do they feel lighter? Do you now feel that you can cope? Does his help give you the energy you need to continue? Does it make you feel less weary? Do you want to go to Jesus and sit with him and rest awhile?

- What do you want to say to Jesus? Do you want to unburden yourself from everything that is going on in your life at the moment? Do you want to put your life in his hands?

Sit with Jesus and reflect on his invitation and enjoy the peace. What is the specific burden or worry you brought to Jesus in the scene? Speak to Jesus from the heart. Tell Him honestly about the heavy weights you have been carrying in your daily life. Perhaps there is a specific burden he invites you to leave behind.

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