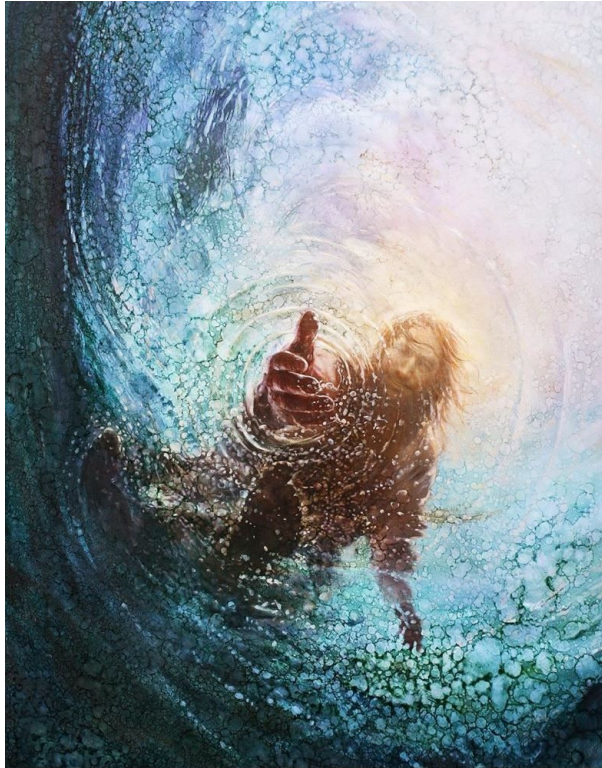


Imaginative Contemplation – Come



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.

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 mind as we push the boat out into unknown waters. Let the Spirit be with you so that you do not take our eyes off Jesus amidst the storms of your life. Ask the Spirit to help you see that Jesus is not only in the security of our boat but also in the storms that surround it.

Reading Matthew 14:22-33

After the crowd had eaten and were satisfied: Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.' And Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

Contemplation

Today's Gospel reading, the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, follows on from the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus has sent away the crowds and now he sends his apostles away in the boat so that he can go away by himself for spiritual sustenance. Let us enter the boat with the apostles and experience their fear of going into unknown waters.

- Who are you in the scene? Do you see yourself as Peter stepping out of the boat or one of the disciples watching? Perhaps you are yourself watching both Peter and the reactions of the other disciples.
- Feel the deep heavy darkness of the night. Is there a breeze to warn you of the gathering storm clouds? Do you suspect that a storm may be brewing?
- What is the mood like in the boat? Do you feel abandoned by Jesus because he went off on his own? Do you wish he was with you because of the storm brewing?
- What happens when the storm comes? Are you afraid because you can't seem to battle against the wind? Do you feel out of control? Imagine yourself in the boat and feel the hard, wet wood under your feet. Feel the violent rocking of the boat as rough waves crash against the sides. Smell the sharp, salty spray of the water, feel the biting cold wind howling against your face, and listen to the shouts of the other frightened disciples.
- Peer out into the deep night during the fourth watch, squinting against the dark silhouette of the waves until you notice a moving figure walking calmly across the churning sea. Who do you think is coming towards you, walking on water amidst the storm? Are you even more afraid? What are you feeling?
- Hear Jesus call out through the wind: "Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid." Notice the immediate shift in tension as his familiar voice cuts through the panic. Do you feel reassured? Does the voice give you courage? Have you ever heard that calm, reassuring voice amidst the turbulence of your life?
- What do you make of Peter saying "If it is you, Lord tell me to come to you?" When Jesus said "Come" watch Peter look at Jesus, climb over the side of the boat, and place his foot onto the unstable surface of the water. Could this invitation also be for you too?
- Imagine you are stepping out of the boat into the turbulent waters. What gives you the courage to go? What does it feel like to walk on water? Why do you begin to sink? Is it because you begin to doubt? Is it because you take your eyes off Jesus? Is your fear too much in this hostile environment?
- What does Jesus do when you call on him to save you? Feel Jesus instantly reach out a strong, wet hand grab your wrist, and pull you up before asking gently why you doubted. Was it because you took your focus off Jesus and focussed on the waves below?

- Feel Jesus put his hand out to steady you, to support you. Do you feel secure knowing that Jesus is not in the boat but with you in the midst of the storm? Do you now realise that in order to go out to meet Jesus, you must leave the security of the boat in spite of the dangers?
- When you and Jesus climb back into the boat, feel the exact moment the fierce wind completely dies down into absolute stillness. Hear the quiet murmur of the disciples falling to their knees, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus is the Son of God?

Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your mind and heart. Ask him to help you have faith in him to leave the security of the boat, to go out into the storm to find him there and to trust that he will be there to give you a helping hand. Share with him what parts of this story felt real, frightening, or comforting to your own life right now

Let us now spend 10 minutes in the company of Jesus reflecting on the our feelings as we are engulfed by the storm.

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