

Imaginative Contemplation – Many are called but few are chosen



Image taken 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.

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 minds so that we can hear God's invitation to his feast and respond positively with enthusiasm.

Reading Matthew 22:1-14

At that time: Jesus again spoke to the chief priests and the elders of the people, in parables, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' " But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find." And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

'But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Contemplation

In today's reading, the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jesus is still addressing the religious leaders and he compares the Kingdom of heaven to a wedding banquet for the King's son (Jesus) with the invitations being sent out by the king himself (God) to his chosen people by his servants (the prophets and disciples). So let us enter the scene as we listen to

Jesus continuing to try and turn the hearts and minds of the religious leaders.

- Who are you in the scene? One of the disciples? One of the religious leaders? Someone who had come to pray in the temple? Someone coming to hear Jesus? Perhaps you are in the scene of the parable and may be a servant watching the story unfold? Or do you recognize a part of yourself that sometimes ignores the invitation because you are consumed by your daily routine?
- Now step into the scene. Imagine the palace of the King. It is vast, built with marble columns and cedar doors. The tables are already set with silver platters. The scent of roasted meat, spices, and fresh wine fills the air.
- You see the servants standing by, ready to pour wine and carry the platters. The King is watching the entrance expectantly.
- Watch the messengers as they return. They look confused because the invited guests made excuses and refused to come. Feel the change in atmosphere change as tension fills the room. Watch the King's face. He is not just a ruler being snubbed; he is a father whose invitation to celebrate his son's joy has been completely trivialised.
- What is going through your mind as you watch the scene unfold? Do you feel sorry for the king whose invited guests refuse to come to the banquet? Do you wonder why they were making excuses since the banquet was a grand one? Why do you think these chosen people do not want to come to the feast?
- Now watch as the King orders the servants to the main roads and alleyways to open the invitation to everyone. Watch as the heavy palace doors open again with a flood of people pouring into the banquet hall. Notice that they are people from the street corners—the poor, the travellers, the good, and the bad alike. Look at their clothing. They wear dusty sandals, worn robes, and patches. They look around the golden hall with wide, disbelieving eyes.
- Listen as the hall erupts into noise, with laughter laughter, with clinking cups, with music, and the shuffling of feet.
- Imagine yourself standing among this crowd. Do you feel you didn't earn this seat; you were simply found on the road and brought in? How does it feel to sit at the King's table surrounded by a mixture of humanity?
- Watch the King as he walks through the crowded tables to greet his new guests. The room goes quiet as he approaches a man sitting near you. This man is sitting at the feast, eating the food, but

he has refused to put on the wedding garment provided at the door.

- How do you feel about this man who has not put on a wedding robe? Do you feel sorry for him? Or do you think that he was rude to refuse the wedding robe offered to him? Would you turn up to a feast without being prepared? Do you think it is important to prepare your mind and heart for your encounter with God? To be living out his Gospel message as a preparation for the feast?
- How have you prepared yourself for God's invitation? As you look down at yourself in this scene, what garment are you wearing? Have you truly accepted the transformation that comes with the King's invitation?
- How do you feel as you listen to Jesus telling us that God's invitation is open to everyone? To saints and sinners alike? That we have all been called and have been given the choice to accept the invitation or refuse it?

Now let us spend 10 minutes in the company of Jesus. Is there anything you want to say to him about his Father's invitation? Perhaps you want to ask him what "wedding garment" he is inviting you to put on in your life right now. Speak to Jesus about what is going on in your heart and mind during this time of prayer and silence.

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