Imaginative Contemplation – Stay Awake



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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.

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 us pray that during this Advent Season that we keep our focus on Christ. Let us be awake to what he wants us to see so that when Christmas comes, we can see God has come in a new way.

Reading Mark 13:33-37

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

Therefore stay awake- for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.'

Contemplation

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, and is also the first Sunday of Cycle B of the new liturgical year for the Church. Let us enter the scene and listen to Jesus' words about the need to stay awake and the need for alertness in waiting for the coming of the Son of Man.

- As you place yourself in the scene, who do you associate with? One of the disciples? Perhaps the man going on a journey, or one of the servants or the doorkeeper. Someone or something not mentioned in the story?
- Imagine sitting with the disciples perhaps outside or in a small room, or perhaps step directly into the household of Jesus's parable, or you could be the doorkeeper standing at your post at the gate. Notice the cool night air, the flickering oil lamps, and the quiet courtyard of the master's estate.
- Look around you at those present. Watch Jesus gesturing with his hands as he describes the master of the house going away and

assigning tasks to each servant. Watch the expressions on the faces of the disciples as they listen intently to Jesus.

- Listen to the background noise of the city preparing for night and the rustle of the leaves overhead. Listen to the tone of Jesus' voice as he looks at you and says: "Be on guard! Keep awake!"
- Now place yourself in the Parable. Feel your anxiety as the Master leaves you with with specific tasks. How do you feel? Perhaps a mixture of awe and responsibility. Perhaps the privilege of being trusted with a specific task by the Master before he departs. What task has the Master left you in charge of? What work is he calling you to do? What are the things in your life that are keeping you awake as you wait for the Master's return? Would you prefer to know the time he is returning?
- Now imagine you are the doorkeeper ordered to stay awake. You look out and the night is pitch black. How does it feel for you to be kept in the dark? The Master has given you specific work to do while he is gone. What is that work in your actual life right now? Do you feel a desire to be found faithful, actively loving, and awake if the Master returns unexpectedly?
- Who are the door keepers who help to bring Jesus into your daily life? How can you be a doorkeeper and help others encounter Jesus in their lives? In what ways can you share your faith with others, particularly as you prepare for Christmas?
- As you look ahead to the season of Advent, what can help you to be alert?

Let us now spend 10 minutes in the presence of Jesus. Tell him where you feel spiritually drowsy or distracted. Ask him what specific task he has placed in your hands during this season of Advent. Pray for the grace of an alert, watching heart that eagerly anticipates his presence every day.

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 English Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition (ESV-CE), published by Asian Trading Corporation and Crossway, 2017.