

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God.

‘Imaginative Prayer’ or ‘Imaginative Contemplation’ is frequently associated with St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), as it is one of the suggested ways of praying found in his Spiritual Exercises. But imaginative Prayer was certainly practiced long before the 16th century.

One of the principal methods (forms) of prayer in the Spiritual Exercises is imaginative contemplation/reflection, when we are personally invited to enter fully into the scenes from the Gospels. It has therefore become widely known as Ignatian contemplation. This way of praying with the imagination can be a very effective way of getting to know Jesus more intimately and learning to follow him more closely.

Some Biblical texts that can be used for practicing this way of praying: Mat 8:23-27 and 14:22-33; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 5:1-11 and 19:1-10; John 4:1-42, 12:1-8 and 21:1-19.

Book suggestions

Gallagher, Timothy (2008) *Meditation and Contemplation, An Ignatian Guide to Praying with Scripture*, Crossroad Publishing Company.

Lonsdale, David (2000) *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear, Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.

Websites

www.pray-as-you-go.org

www.sacredspace.ie

Front cover image: www.Pixabay.com



Praying with the Bible

Using your imagination in prayer



***“Glory be to him, whose power working within us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.”***

Eph 3:20



In imaginative contemplation we enter into a life event or story passage of Scripture by way of imagination, making use of all our senses.

The Spirit of Jesus guides and teaches us, enabling us to let our present reality meet the reality and truth of the Gospel. We become present to the mysteries of Christ's life.

Choose a passage. Take a few minutes to get into a relaxed attentiveness.

Read the passage a few times to familiarise yourself with it.

Remember that these words are God's words, and that they speak to you, here and now.

Put the passage to one side and **imagine** that the events described in the passage are **happening now**, right before you: You see the people, the place, the buildings; you feel the breeze, the sunshine; you hear the sounds, take in the smells and the taste – don't worry about what bubbles to the surface.

Try and picture yourself present in that place and time. Take part in what is happening: You are in it, talking to Jesus. *This is your*

prayer. Don't worry if your imagination takes you away from the details of the passage, the historical or geographical facts.

Whatever happens during this contemplation, **spend a little time at the end of it being with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit....**as you would with a good friend: sometimes talking, sometimes listening, sometimes being together in silence.

Speak from the heart, simply and honestly.

Don't lose heart if you find yourself distracted or unable to imagine. Keep returning to the passage if you need to, gently bringing yourself back to it. **It may need practice!**

If nothing seems to be happening even after several attempts, do **stay with it**. Speak to God about your feelings. Remember that 'nothing happening' times can also be significant.

When you're ready, **end your prayer** by saying thank you or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

