



Imaginative Prayer

Engaged Catholic Prayer

Put on the Life Savior

Below you'll find our new form of prayer on which to build up to 20 minutes of prayer as a household for **March**. This month we're focusing on the "imaginative prayer" which St. Ignatius uses in *The Spiritual Exercises*.

Imaginative Prayer, called contemplation, is suited especially for the Gospels. Through the act of contemplation, the Holy Spirit makes present an event in Jesus' life **in a way that I am part of the scene**. I use my imagination to dig deeper into the story so that God may communicate with me in a personal, evocative way. I pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event. I lose myself in the story. At some point, I place myself in the scene.

Our minds are storehouses of images and memories, and through them God works in our hearts. Praying with our imaginations can create a deeper and more personal intimacy with Jesus, Mary, the disciples and others written about in scripture. I can take the familiar stories I know and let them flow through our own imagination and see where the Lord guides it. How do I start?

1. **Get settled in a comfortable chair and in a quiet place** where I won't be distracted. My first gesture is to open my hands on my lap, and to ask the Holy Spirit to open my heart and imagination.
2. Then **choose a story out of the Gospel. Read through it once slowly** and put it down. **Imagine the scene you read about**.
3. **Place yourself fully within the scene of the story**. We become onlooker-participants and give full rein to our imagination. What is the mood – tense?

- joyful? confused? angry? Jesus is speaking to a blind man at the side of the road. What is around me? Who else is there? What do I hear in the scene? If I am in a house, what noises are in the house or in the street outside? What are the smells around me? Feel the hot Mediterranean sun beating down. Smell the dust kicked up by the passersby. Feel the itchy clothing you're wearing, the sweat rolling down your brow, a rumble of hunger. See the desperation in the blind man's face and hear the wail of hope in his words. Note the irritation of the disciples. Above all, watch Jesus—the way He walks, His gestures, the look in His eyes, the expression on His face. Hear Him speak the words that are recorded in the Gospel. Go on to imagine other words and actions of Jesus.
4. Does Jesus turn to speak to you? Listen/ imagine what the Lord says to you.
 5. Take a moment to respond and converse with Jesus. Be sure to listen.

It helps if I imagine Jesus and his disciples as the real people they were who walked the earth. St. Ignatius imagined that the first person Jesus appeared to after the Resurrection was his mother, and he encourages us to picture Jesus appearing at home to Mary, watching the joy and emotion in the scene.

Imaginative prayer makes the Jesus of the Gospels my Jesus. It helps me develop a unique and personal relationship with Him. I watch Jesus' face. I listen to the way He speaks. I notice how people respond to Him. These imaginative details bring me to know Jesus as more than a name or a historical figure in a book. He is a living person. I can say what the villagers in John's Gospel told the Samaritan woman, "We have come to know Him ourselves, and not just from your report." Below are resources that may help you to pray Scripture imaginatively:

tenwaystopray.com/home/imagination-ignatius/practice

beunos.com/prayerimaginative.htm

You are invited to learn how and to pray Imaginative Prayer on **Monday, March 7 @ 1pm or 6pm.**