Imaginative Prayer

Contemplative Practices

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

wholeness takes practice

Instructions

Be Still: Take a couple of minutes to center into the moment and presence of God, Sacred Mystery, something greater than us.

Choose a story from scripture or other sacred text: Read through it once then set it aside. Go through the story again and let your imagination take you through the story. What is the setting like? What do you notice with your senses? Who else is there? What conversation takes place? What is the mood of the story? What feelings do you notice in yourself? What do you observe in others in the story?

Let the story play out without trying to hold it to historical accuracy or significance. Let the story be revealed to you. Allow the characters to be really people that are part of your life.

Reflect: Give yourself time to reflect on what this relationship with the story offers you. Write a reflection in a journal. Note the nuances you experienced or questions that are raised for you.

Imaginative Prayer Basics

excerpt from IgnatianSpirituality.com

Ignatian prayer places great emphasis on the power of the imagination to deepen our relationship with God. One of the principal forms of prayer in the Spiritual Exercises is imaginative reflection on scenes from the Gospels. The praying retreatant becomes a participant in the event—the healing of the blind man Bartimaeus, for example. The retreatant feels the heat of the sun, smells the passing animals, hears the noise of the crowd. Above all, the retreatant watches and hears Jesus as he approaches the man, heals him, and disputes with the angry Pharisees.

This kind of imaginative prayer seeks the truth of the heart rather than the truth of facts. The person who prays this way notices the feelings and desires inspired by an encounter with Jesus. To deepen the encounter, Ignatius recommends savoring the experience, returning to it again and again to relish the details.

These imaginative prayer encounters with God stir the emotions. They provoke feelings of gratitude and evoke courage and humility. Their purpose is to call forth a heartfelt desire to know Jesus and to follow him. In the words of Hugo Rahner, Ignatius “uses pictures and images to present what is otherwise beyond all conceiving.”