

Imaginative Contemplation: Receiving Christ's Invitation—A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ's mission.

Purpose: to be awake to Christ's invitation by reading and imagining or placing one's self with Jesus in a story of scripture from the four Gospels. Rather than just using our thoughts and memories, we place ourselves in a story from the Gospels to encounter the Living Christ in a personal way by use of all or any of our senses. To receive Christ we must know him! This practice is inspired and adapted from the spiritual practice "Imaginative Contemplation" developed by Ignatius of Loyola.*

Steps:

1. Become aware of the presence of God and awake to Christ's invitation. Take a moment to become calm and centered.
2. Choose and read a text from the four Gospels in the spirit of prayer seeking to be closer to the Living Christ.
3. Read the text a 2nd time and visualize and sense the scene or event by sensing the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event.
4. Place yourself in the scene and spirit of the story in a way that makes sense to you, whether in the Biblical time or a modern time or circumstance for a personal encounter with the Living Christ.
5. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the Living Christ in a way that is meaningful for you now.
6. End this time by reading the same passage of scripture in a spirit of prayer and conversation—heart to heart talk with Jesus—using your everyday language as you would with a friend.

Tips for the Process:

- Request the Holy Spirit to draw you closer to the Living Christ by remembering his promise to always be with you and his invitation to share life with you.
- Use your imagination. Although, it takes an 'imaginary' eye to see yourself in the scripture, this practice is enhanced when we use all of our senses and imagine the elements in the 'scene' of the scripture such as wind, the dry heat, the spray of water, feelings of joy, sorrow, tiredness, and any thoughts that would 'go through one's head.'
- Do not rush—take time. There may be days when you follow each step. Other days, you may want to stay with only one or two steps. There is no particular length—less or longer than 10 - 20 minutes is fine.
- The key is simplicity and not being constrained by each step. Find and follow a pattern that works for you.
- Consider beginning this practice with the Mission Prayer.

* See more at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/prayer-is-a-conversation/#sthash.FInpU0TW.dpuf>