

St. Ignatian Contemplation: Imaginative Prayer

Set the scene:

1. Determine the best time during the day and then make a commitment to show up daily. If you make God #1 in your life as you are in His, He orders your day.
2. Establish your prayer priorities. i.e. 1st) Gospel of the Day. If you want a personal relationship with Jesus and desire to model your life after His, you need to get to know Him; 2) ... 3) ... 4) ... 5) ...
3. Find a quiet location where you will not be interrupted (silence your phone, shut off TV and radio).
4. Set the scene (bless yourself at the Holy Water font, crucifix in your sight, Bible next to you, light a candle, close the curtains, Magnificat or Word Among Us for daily scripture passages, breviary, journal).
5. Make yourself comfortable and invite Jesus into your day. Call upon the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, ears and heart to encounter Jesus personally in the scripture.

Prayer:

1. Quiet: Quiet the senses, still the mind, focus the heart. It is in the silence that God Speaks. Mt 6:6. "When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Mt 14:23. "After dismissing the crowds he went up on the mountain by himself to pray." St Augustine: "Prayer is an exercise of desire." Invite the Holy Spirit into your prayer.
2. Preparatory prayer: Open my heart to you my God by giving me the grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of you my God and Divine Majesty.
3. Ask for the grace needed. Ask for the grace to desire what God desires. God's desires for you are infinite. Do not limit God. Allow Him to work miracles in and through you. Look beyond what is available to you on earth. What do you truly desire? What does God desire for you? What is your ultimate purpose? Does your desire equal God's desire for you? Are you united in your goals? If you have a specific grace you desire ask boldly and with confidence.
4. Read the Scripture 2 to 3 times. **God first talks to us, we receive and are called to respond.**
 - a. **First** using your intellect and reason. Search for truth and authenticity via the experience, understanding and judgement. Look at the details: who, what, when and where. Every word is important. Go to Bible footnotes for clarity as needed. This is where you are doing the work. Reflect.
 - b. **Second and third** (repetition to go deeper) times to visualize the scriptural scene as you read the scripture passage. Use your five senses. This is where you allow God to enter in and do the work. Your position/posture is to receive and experience God working in your life as He draws you to intimate union and invites your will to unite with His. The Holy Spirit prompts you, provides insight and calls you to mission. You are moved from the head into the heart-the longest journey. Focus on where the Spirit leads you.
 - i. As you read pay attention to where the Holy Spirit is placing you in the scene. Open your mind and heart to receive His guidance and to follow His call. Let go of control and allow the hand of God to direct you. In addition to hearing the text you are able to see it with the imagination.
 - ii. Upon noting where you are placed in the scene, see the person(s) and reflect on the details of the scene. Let it unfold before your eyes. Draw fruit from what you see.
 - iii. Hear the sounds as the scene unfolds. What are your reactions to the quiet, noise, yelling, praying, crying, celebrating, breaking of the bread, pouring of the wine, washing of the feet?
 - iv. Use the sense of smell to become aware of the smells you recognize and those you are not familiar with. Baking bread, fish, dust, hay, sea air, smoke ... smell the infinite fragrances.
 - v. What can you taste? Fruit, bread, wine, tears, salt, sweet, bitter... taste the infinite sweetness.
 - vi. Reach out and touch what is present. Baby soft skin, tears flowing from a cheek, dry bread, wood of the cross, baptismal waters of the Jordan, anointing oil...embrace and kiss the Holy ground.
 - vii. Respond to the summons by God to love, via deliberation, evaluation, choice and action. Open the book of life. Discover the movements that stir in your heart and discern them. Recognize and be empowered by God's invitation to unite your will to His. Rest in God's presence. Reflect.
5. Colloquy: Speak to God as your heart is moved. Enter into a friendly conversation with the God who loves you and calls you by name. A surge of the heart. Your own personal reflection is written in your heart. You encounter the Word of God for your unique personal benefit. Praise and thank God. Respond then rest.
6. Close with the Our Father. Commit to be back tomorrow.
7. Journal to capture reactions, thoughts, progress, feelings, messages from God, consolation, desolation...