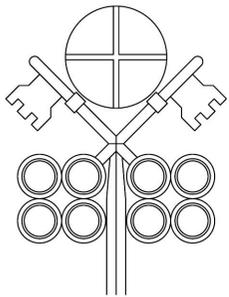


in the light of what you have seen, heard, learned?

Is there some specific direction in your life
which God is giving you?

*(You may find it helpful to talk and/or pray through your
responses to this meditation with a wise friend or pastor.)*



IMAGINATIVE MEDITATION

by the Rev'd David Runcorn

St Ignatius Loyola

Around the year 1520, a badly-wounded soldier, Ignatius Loyola, was convalescing in his family home in Spain. Recovery was slow and he was bored. To pass the time he read two books he had found in the family library. The first was *Romances of Chivalric Knights*, a collection of heroic sagas very popular in his day. The second was *The life of Christ*. The soldier became a Christian, sold his possessions and (with typical thoroughness) began to plan out a disciplined pattern

for his discipleship for Christ. In 1536, at the age of 45, he founded the Society of Jesus (hence 'Jesuits'), for which he wrote a kind of spiritual military training program. It was published in 1548 as 'The Spiritual Exercises' (*see the leaflet 'Just 10 minutes a day' for a version of Ignatius technique for self-reflection*). They have been widely used ever since. The impact of his teaching in his day was considerable. Along with Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and St John of Cross (1543-1591) Ignatius was a leader in a deep spiritual awakening in sixteenth-century Southern Europe.

Ignatian Spirituality

This is a spirituality with a *strong affective dimension*. It is an approach to prayer and biblical meditation that engages all the senses and the emotions. It is far removed from any detached intellectualism. You are expected to meet God in direct encounter and sense his presence. The use of the imagination is of fundamental importance in leading us to a meaningful, decisive prayer. We would be expected to use our senses when meditating on a biblical passage. After reading a Bible passage you would be encouraged to ask yourself

What can I hear?

What can I see?

What can I smell?

What can I touch?

What can I taste?

You would also be encouraged to have a conversation with people in the gospel stories, or with Jesus himself. You can try this with any number of Bible stories but here is one example.

An example of an Ignatian-style bible meditation

Mark 5:1-15, the Gerasene Demoniac

(The notes that follow are suggestions to give the flavour of an Ignatian guided meditation. They are not otherwise intended to be directive.)

Read the passage slowly, perhaps several times.

What in the details of the story do you particularly notice?

(He lived among the tombs,
Chains could not hold him
No one had the strength to subdue him
Night and day among the tombs
He ran and fell before Jesus
Sitting clothed in his right mind)

Take a moment to think through the background situation of the passage you have read.

What information do you need to appreciate the full context?

Picture the place in your imagination and seek to enter into the story yourself.

In your imagination,
see the tombs and the person in torment

What torments you - what conflicts, accusations
anxieties, fears, temptations or fantasies arise for you?

Seek to listen to what God is saying to you through the scripture passage and your entry into it.

You see Jesus come out of the boat to the man in the tombs

He runs and falls at his feet

He had no idea what Jesus could do.

He was not programming the outcome.

He left the action to Jesus.

The results? - he had to allow God to work that out.

Can you bring some of your own confusion/chaos/noise to Jesus?

Approach the Son of the Most High

You can't imagine what he will do

You're not trying to programme the outcome
which God will choose

You are giving yourself now to Jesus
because you want him to choose the way

You want him to show you the way forward

You want to break through into a new ability
to be with him in the stillness

Stay there at the feet of Jesus for awhile

Picture yourself before him, wanting, waiting ...
then receive the touch of Jesus

What is God asking you to do, showing you, or teaching you?

You may or may not understand the implications of it
immediately – if so, hold it in your mind and ponder it, or
preferably check it out with your director, spiritual
friend, prayer partner etc.

Respond in prayer

What would you like to say to God