

IMAGINATIVE MEDITATION

Note: This spiritual exercise and its instruction, is taken almost exclusively from the book "Inner Compass" by Margaret Silf. The material below can be found inside chapter 14 which is entitled "To Love You More Dearly." I have added a few thoughts of my own, but the material below is almost entirely found in the book.

Ignatius teaches us how to open ourselves up to intimacy with God through "Gospel-based meditation, through which we can, in our prayer, become participants in the life and ministry of Jesus and discover its reality for us where we are here and now."

1. ASK God to reveal himself to you; express your desire to experience Him
2. READ the passage several times until it is familiar and you feel at home with it
3. IMAGINE that you are an active participant in the scene.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU FIND YOURSELF TAKING IN THE SCENE?

– for example, are you one of the disciples, a bystander, or the person being healed? Listen inwardly to what God is showing you through your role in the scene. Talk with the characters in the scene, especially with Jesus.

THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO RULES:

- * never moralize or judge yourself
- * always respond from your heart and not from your head...our purpose in prayer is not to defend or condemn ourselves or to come up with any kind of analysis or sermon, but simply to respond, from our inmost depths, to what God is sharing with us of himself.

If you find it difficult to enter into the scene...don't worry about getting the facts right. You may well find that the scene doesn't take place in first century Palestine but in rush hour traffic.

HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT THIS IS PRAYER AND NOT JUST A FLIGHT OR FANTASY?

- * Has my meeting with the Lord in this way made any difference to my way of being present in the world?
- * Has it opened my eyes in any way, either to my own ways of acting and responding to others, or to the needs and vulnerability of other people around me?
- * Remember that evidence of a good prayer life is not abundant experiences of God, but rather growth in the fruit of the Spirit. Experiences of God have to lead to action; they have to make a difference in your own life and in the life of this community.
- * Is there a sense of consistency between what I feel I have been shown in this prayer time and the way I feel the Lord is dealing with me in my life in other ways?
- * If your prayer seems to send you off on a tangent and suggest a decision that is out of line with your personality or commitments, then it is wise to be cautious. God's ways are usually [but not always] gentle, and they are reliably consistent.



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* Does the prayer leave me feeling basically at peace [even though it may have confronted me with hard challenges] and does the sense of peace continue as time goes on?

When we follow our daydreams the sense of satisfaction is invariably short lived. When the dreams are God's dreams for us, the peace is a lasting one, which will keep recurring and strengthening in our prayer.

The more time you put into these spiritual exercises the more you will begin to see God all around you in your everyday life. Whether it be.. in a sunset, or in the eyes of a homeless person etc...

"There is a marvelous bonus waiting for those who entrust themselves to God in intimate prayer...steadily, he will open up more and more of himself to you – or rather, he will increasingly open up your inner vision, to notice him in everything around you and to recognize his presence in every moment."