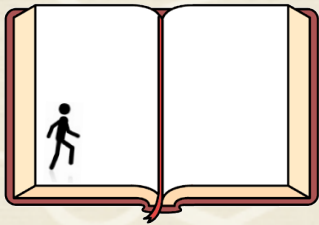


Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, popularized this form of prayer. In Ignatian Contemplation we use our imaginations to step into a particular story from the Bible. The story unfolds around us and may even change because of our presence within it.

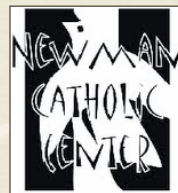


When he was first learning this way to pray, Fr. James Martin thought it sounded ridiculous. He was encouraged to try it out anyway. Later he wrote, “When I set aside my suspicions the results amazed me. Sometimes the prayer was difficult or dry, but many times I felt as if I actually was in the story. I was right there with the apostles or in the crowds, seeing a miracle, hearing Jesus preach, witnessing the Crucifixion. And I was astonished at the emotions evoked and the insights received.”

(My Life with the Saints, pp. 83-84)

God communicates with us through every other part of our lives, so why not through our imaginations?

—Fr. James Martin, SJ



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PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE:

IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION



Also known as *Contemplative Prayer*
or *Imaginative Prayer*

HOW DO I START?

- Choose a passage that has some action. Although this prayer form is mostly used with the Gospels, you can use it with other biblical passages.
- Allow at least 30 minutes for this form of prayer.
- Choose a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. (Silence your cell phone!)
- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Pray for God's guidance.

AN OPENING PRAYER

God of wisdom and love,

You offer me your living Word
so that I may know and love you
better.

Clear my cluttered mind.

Focus my thoughts and attention on
this sacred story.

Free me to enter into the narrative.
Open up all of my senses until I am
fully present to what is happening.

Guide me through the story until
your Spirit and I are walking as one.

I ask this in the name of Jesus, your
Son and my Lord.

Amen.



ENTERING THE STORY



HOW DO I PLACE MYSELF IN THE STORY?

- Describe your surroundings.
 - Where are you? Are you indoors or outdoors?
 - Are you warm or cold?
 - Is it light or dark?
 - What do you smell?
- Who is in the story? Who are you in the story?
- What are you doing?
- Do you go anywhere?
- Does anyone speak to you? If so, what do they say?
- Do you speak? If so, to whom? What do you say?
- Do you touch anyone? Does anyone touch you?
- What do you feel?
- What do others seem to feel? What do they each seem to think?
- How is God present in the story?

You don't have to follow the story as it's written. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your imagination in a new direction.

If you keep practicing this prayer form, eventually you won't need to use these questions.

You may find it fruitful to do Ignatian Contemplation with a spiritual director or close friend. Read the passage together, then have the other person ask questions that are tailored to your responses. You can also reflect on your time of prayer with that person.

When you've finished, offer a prayer of thanksgiving. If "nothing happened," be patient with yourself, and try this form of prayer again later.