

## Ignatian Contemplation

Ignatian Contemplation is a form of meditative prayer that has been part of the Christian tradition since the twelfth century. It consists of taking a scene from the life of Christ and re-living it, taking part in it as if you were a participant in the event. This type of prayer uses our imagination and intuition to engage our heart, mind, emotions and spirit in a way that can help us relate to Jesus in a deeper, more personal way.

### Steps in Ignatian Contemplation:

1. **Prepare** with prayer
2. **Read** the scripture passage several times until you know the story
3. **Picture the setting** and the characters in as much detail as you can
4. **Picture yourself taking part** in the story as one of the Biblical characters or as yourself
5. **Imagine** what you would do and say in that situation
6. When the story comes to an end in your mind, sit quietly and **think** about what you learned and how you can apply it to your life
7. **Dialog** with God about questions or issues that arose (pray)
8. Take time to **listen** and hear what God has to say

Please turn the page for a guide through Ignatian Contemplation on John 5:2-9.

## The Paralyzed Man is Healed

*After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked.*  
(John 5:2-9)

Now gently close your eyes and let your imagination take you back to the time of Christ. Visualize the pool called Bethesda with its five stone porches...with each breath you take, feel the hot, dry weather in your lungs and on your skin. Take time to imagine the whole setting in as much detail as possible. [PAUSE]

Imagine the crowd near the pool. It is Passover and there are large numbers of people milling about. What sort of people are they and how are they dressed? Do they interact with the sick or are they there as curiosity seekers, hoping to see an angel move the water and someone miraculously healed? [PAUSE]

See the large number of sick people scattered around the pool and lying in the shade of the porches. From what kind of illnesses are they suffering? What are they doing? Let the whole scene come to life with sounds and smells as well as visual images. [PAUSE]

See yourself standing near the pool. What are you doing? Why have you come to this place? What are your feelings as you survey the scene and watch these people? Do you speak to any one? What do you say? [PAUSE]

Now notice the sick man mentioned in the Gospel. Where is he in the crowd? How is he dressed? What is his infirmity? You begin walking in his direction. Will you talk to him or turn your eyes away and ignore him? [PAUSE]

As you get closer to him, you notice from the corner of your eye that Jesus has entered this place. How does the crowd react? Do they know he is a healer? Where does he go? What does he do? What do you think he is feeling? [PAUSE]

Jesus is now coming towards you. What are you feeling as he approaches? [PAUSE] Step aside when you realize Jesus wants to talk to the sick man. What does Jesus say and do? How does the man respond? Notice how each of them looks and acts towards the other. [PAUSE]

Listen closely as Jesus asks, "Do you want to get well?" Look at the man's face as he responds. What does this tell you about what he is feeling? Listen to Jesus' command as he tells the man to get up and walk. How does the man react? Does he hesitate? Note his attempt to get up...the miracle of healing! What does the man do now? How does Jesus react and what does he say to him? What are you thinking and feeling? [PAUSE]

Jesus now turns to you. What is the first thing he says to you? How do you respond? Talk to Jesus about the miracle that has just taken place. [PAUSE]

Is there any sickness or problem you have that you want to share with Jesus? Tell him about it. [PAUSE] Listen to his words to you, “Do you want to be healed?” How do you answer him? [PAUSE] Listen to his powerful words of healing as he gently lays his hands on your head. [PAUSE]

When you look up into his face, Jesus smiles at you, then turns and walks away. What are you feeling? [PAUSE]

Spend a few moments reflecting on this encounter with the Lord. [PAUSE]

**CONCLUDING PRAYER:** Loving Jesus, stir up our faith so we may never hesitate to ask for your healing power in our lives. Amen.<sup>i</sup>

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**References:**

This exercise is based on a meditation by Anthony De Mello in *Sadhana, A Way to God*, pages 79-82.

For a CD of Guided Meditations and Gospel Encounters with Jesus Christ, go to Amazon.com and check out *And the Word Became Flesh* by Colleen M. Arnold.