

SACRED RHYTHMS | imaginative prayer

Materials: Bible, Journal and pen optional

Brief Description:

Imaginative prayer is another way to pray the text, scripture. It comes to us from the Ignatian Way, or the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius believed that the imagination is a way for us to experience a relationship with God we cannot otherwise. The imagination is a gift from God and can help us to grow in our relationship with Him. It goes beyond our thinking and engages our emotions so that we can go deeper into the biblical story and find God there.

With this practice, it is often helpful to use a story from the gospel or an Old Testament narrative. Some may find this way of praying difficult at first. If that is the case, notice what is blocking you from entering the story. Some may hear or feel the story more than visualize it. Do not try to force it, but pray, as you are able. Trust that God will speak to you whether through imagination, intellect, understanding, or emotion.

In one strand of Jewish mystical writing, it is said that “the fierce power of imagination is a gift from God.” (Matthew Fox, *Creativity*, p. 58)

Doing the Practice:

- Begin in silence. *It may be helpful to take a few deep breaths and whisper a prayer such as “God, help me see what you want me to see.”*

- Read the story, slowly, once or twice

- When you finish reading, take time to write or draw to help imagine yourself in the story using the following questions:

What does it feel like in this setting? Is it hot? What are you wearing? Where are you in the story? Watching from the outside? As one of the characters in the story? What do you hear, see, smell, feel, and experience as the narrative continues? What do you notice about Jesus? What does Jesus notice about you? Does he speak to you? Do you speak to him? Do you speak with other characters in the story? What do you say? How do they respond?

- Take some time to notice what, if anything, this imaginative exercise revealed about what is going on in your heart. What do you feel toward God? What do you want to say to Him? What do you sense God feeling toward you? What does God say to you?

- End with a prayer of gratitude for the experience of being present in the story and with God.