



The 16th century Spanish saint, Ignatius of Loyola, encouraged people to come to know Jesus through a method of imaginative contemplation of the Gospels. This Ignatian method focuses on the humanity of Jesus and engages the human senses: we ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘taste’, ‘touch’ and ‘smell’ our way through a Gospel scene, allowing the story and characters of the sacred text to come alive to us in the present.

The sequence of steps might look as follows:

Imaginative Contemplation

Choose a Gospel story in which Jesus interacts with others.

Prepare

Make the Sign of the Cross together.

Pray: ‘May the Holy Spirit fuel our imaginations and fill us with the desire to know Jesus better.’

Read, imagine

Become familiar with the Gospel passage. Read it aloud, slowly. You might say to the class, ‘Close your eyes as you listen to this passage, and “see” the details of the scene in your imagination.’

‘What is happening? Who is saying what? How does Jesus look or sound to you? How do the others respond to him? What kind of energy pervades the conversation? Is there warmth, surprise, compassion, hurt, anger? Does Jesus speak to someone, make a gesture, use touch?’



Read again, enter the scene

Read the passage again, or invite students to read the text for themselves, and enter the story more deeply.

‘Where do you find yourself in this scene? Are you alone with Jesus? Part of a crowd? Seeking healing? Arguing with Jesus? Assisting him in reaching out to others? Perhaps you are observing a distance. With which biblical character do you identify?’

You might encourage students to engage all five senses; e.g., see the face of a Roman soldier, hear the cry of a child, smell the disease of an ill person, feel the material of Jesus’ cloak, taste the wine at the wedding feast.

‘What thoughts, feelings, insights arise in you?’

Respond

‘Sit quietly. Talk with Jesus about your experience of this prayer. Ask him for what you need. Give thanks for whatever fruit or insight emerged.’

This response could also be expressed by journaling, drawing or making something with one’s hands.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

For more about this and other contemplative methods, go to the website sweeterthanahoney.dbbco.org (‘Learning the Word’).