

Ignatian Contemplation is prayer with Scripture. It is meeting God through story. The prayer develops as you “live into” a Scripture story with all your senses and imagination. You become a participant in the story, and you continue in the story in your heart, mind, imagination, spirit, and body after the reading ends. You let the Spirit guide the prayer – trying not to force anything to happen - you let it happen to you, within you, around you. You may pray with the same story for many days in a row before you feel the prayer is complete, that God has spoken to you, that you have heard God, and worked through what it means for you.

Chose a story from the scripture that you wish to reflect on and read it for the first time, slowly and reflectively noticing the outline of the story: where and when does it take place, who is there, what happens. Pause and reflect for 2 or 3 minutes.

Read the story for a second time noticing more details this time: who are the major players, who else is there, what are they doing, how do they interact, what is the setting like, what time of day is it, what is the mood, the atmosphere. Pause and be aware of your discoveries for 2 to 3 minutes.

Read the story for a third time noticing more detail but as if you are present in the story as an individual or an object, animal, part of the scenery. You may even imagine yourself as something not specifically mentioned in the story, but sense might have been there. What are you doing, thinking, feeling or what is being done to or with you if you are inanimate? Notice the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location and event. What are the emotions and the undertones that surface in your thoughts? Allow yourself a lengthier period for this part of the prayer.

Read the passage for a fourth time, experiencing it as the person or object you are in the story. When the reading ends, let the story continue to unfold within you, in your imagination, mind and heart, as the person or object you are. Allow yourself as much time as you need for this part of the prayer.

When you are ready to conclude allow yourself three of four minutes of silence during which you thank God for the experience you have had.

You might like to make some notes on your experience either for your personal benefit, or to share with your spiritual director.