

ACTIVE CONTEMPLATION IGNATIAN STYLE

A PRAYER ETHOD ON THE EVENTS OF OUR LORD'S LIFE.

(Book of the Exercises nos. 110 to 117)

Introduction;

- ✓ *The method of active contemplation' proposed by St. Ignatius in the book of the Spiritual Exercises on the events or mysteries of Our Lord's life, as narrated in the New Testament, is a prayer method based on fantasy, namely, on the enormous power our imagination has on our thoughts and affectivity.*
- ✓ *Imagination can make us feel present at events that took place in the past and it can arouse in us strong feelings.*
- ✓ *Imagination or fantasy stirs our feelings, quickens our thinking and motivates us to action.*
- ✓ *Ignatius expects from those using this method of "active contemplation" **not only to make themselves present** at the scene they contemplate, but even more, he wants them, in fantasy, **to interact with the people involved in that event**; for instance; when we contemplate the Nativity of the Lord, we have to imagine ourselves **being** in the cave, **seeing** and gazing at Our Lady, Joseph and the new born Child. **hearing** what they speak, even **talking** with them, **kissing** the child, **offering our services** to Our Lady and Mary, **smelling** the stench of the stable, **feeling** the cold of that night, **hearing** the mooing of the cow and the braying of the donkey!*
- ✓ *The more involved we get – in fantasy- in the event we contemplate the closer we shall come to Jesus.*

Procedure:

- Choose the mystery in the life of the Lord you want to contemplate; for instance, The Annunciation, The Nativity, The Flight into Egypt, The Loss and Finding of the Child in the Temple, Jesus Temptations, His Baptism, any of his Miracles, The Last Supper, Agony in the Garden,. Way of the Cross, Crucifixion, etc.
- Quiet down. Relaxation or awareness exercises may help
- Invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit.
- Find in the text of the New Testament the place where that mystery is mentioned.
- Read that passage attentively once, twice or even more times.
- Then, recall that event to mind as vividly as you can in the smallest details
- Make yourself present – through imagination - to that mystery as vividly as possible.
- Interact with the people involved in the event: **see, listen, talk, act, feel**, etc.
- Close the exercise with a **colloquy**.

NOTE; As an instance of this method of "Active Contemplation on the events of Jesus life as given to us in the New Testament, we offer here below the contemplation of the mystery of the Nativity of the Lord quoting verbatim the instructions given by St. Ignatius in his Book of the Spiritual Exercises. (Nos. 110 to 117)

The same instructions given by Ignatius can be followed for the contemplation of any other mystery of the life of Our Lord Jesus

“THE NATIVITY”

➤ **Make you preparatory petition.** (*Exercises No.104*) “Ask for what I desire. I will beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations, may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty. (*For the contemplation in all the events of the life of Jesus the preparatory prayer petition will be: the same*)

➤ **First Prelude.** **This is the history of the mystery.** (*No 111*)

Here it will be that our Lady, about nine months with child, and, as may piously believed, seated on an ass, set out for Nazareth. She was accompanied by Joseph and a maid, who was leading an ox. They are going to Bethlehem to pay the tribute that Caesar imposed on those lands.

➤ **Second Prelude:** **This is a mental representation of the place.** (*No 112*)

It will consist here in seeing in imagination the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, or through valleys or over hills. Observe also the place or cave where Christ is born; whether big or little; whether high or low; and how it is arranged

➤ **Third Prelude:** **This is to ask for what I desire.** (*No 113*)

Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely.

➤ **First Point:** **This will consist in seeing the persons** (*No114*). , namely, our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid and the Child Jesus after birth. I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. **Then, I will reflect on myself that I may reap some fruit.**

➤ **Second Point:** **This is to consider, observe and contemplate what the persons are saying** (*No115*) Then, I will reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it.

➤ **Thirst Point:** **This will be to see and consider what they are doing,** (*No 116*).

For example, making the journey and labouring that our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labors, after hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, after insults and outrages, He might die on the cross, and all this for me.

Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.

➤ **Colloquy:** (*No117*) **Close with a colloquy and with an “Our Father”**

Note: **A “colloquy” is a spontaneous chat, heart to heart, to the person/s addressed at, on the thoughts and feelings that popped up in our mind and heart while we meditated as a creature speaking to his Creator.**

or a child to his Father or Mother,

or a lover to his beloved,

or a disciple to his Master,

or a friend to his friend.

