

A CONTEMPLATION ON THE NATIVITY*

(A Literal Translation of the St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises #110-117)

Prayer. The usual Preparatory Prayer.

First Prelude. The first Prelude is the narrative and it will be here how Our Lady went forth from Nazareth, about nine months with child, as can be piously meditated, seated on an ass, and accompanied by Joseph and a maid, taking an ox, to go to Bethlehem to pay the tribute which Caesar imposed on all those lands.

Second Prelude. The second, a composition, seeing the place. It will be here to see with the sight of the imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem; considering the length and the breadth, and whether such road is level or through valleys or over hills; likewise looking at the place or cave of the Nativity, how large, how small, how low, how high, and how it was prepared.

Third Prelude. The third will be the same, and in the same form, as in the preceding Contemplation.

First Point. The first Point is to see the persons; that is, to see Our Lady and Joseph and the maid, and, after His Birth, the Child Jesus, I making myself a poor creature and a wretch of an unworthy slave, looking at them and serving them in their needs, with all possible respect and reverence, as if I found myself present; and then to reflect on myself in order to draw some profit.

Second Point. The second, to look, mark and contemplate what they are saying, and, reflecting on myself, to draw some profit.

Third Point. The third, to look and consider what they are doing, as going a journey and laboring, that the Lord may be born in the greatest poverty; and as a termination of so many labors -- of hunger, of thirst, of heat and of cold, of injuries and affronts -- that He may die on the Cross; and all this for me: then reflecting, to draw some spiritual profit.

Colloquy. I will finish with a Colloquy as in the preceding Contemplation, and with an OUR FATHER.

*These text have both been taken from David Fleming's *Draw Me Into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises (A Literal Translation & A Contemporary Reading)*.

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(A Contemporary Reading by David Fleming, S.J.)

Preparation: I take the usual time to place myself before God in reverence, begging that everything in my day be more and more directed to God's service and praise.

Grace: I continue to ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to be able to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely.

The Setting: The familiar story of the Nativity should allow me the more easily to be present fully to the persons and places of this mystery. Whatever methods help me enter into the whole scene and to be with the persons involved I should embrace.

To be able to enter into the deep-down stillness of this night, to be able to see this very human baby with all the wonder that comes from eyes of faith, to watch how Mary and Joseph handle themselves, their own response to God at this time--these are various aspects or focuses of the mystery to which I may find yourself drawn. In comparison with our previous contemplation's way of entering into a gospel mystery by looking with God's eyes, now I rather place myself into the scene, perhaps being one who tries to help and serve, with all possible respect and reverence. I should take note of the hardship that is already so much a part of Jesus's presence in the world. The labors of the journey to Bethlehem, the struggles of finding a shelter, the poverty, hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, the insults that meet the arrival of God-with-us: and all this from the beginning that he might die on the cross--for me. I will reflect in this way to draw some spiritual profit.

Colloquy: According to the different aspects which I may focus upon at any one time within the prayer period, I respond accordingly, for example, to Mary, Joseph, Jesus, God the Father. Perhaps there is little to say because this style of contemplation is often more a "being with" experience than a word-response. I bring the period of prayer to a close with an *Our Father*.

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