



## 1. A PRAYER PRACTICE FOR SITTING IN THE COMPASSIONATE GAZE OF JESUS AND MARY

Too often we are aware of the critical glare of others and can easily come to 'sit' in that place. So it's important that we practice sitting in the *compassionate* gaze of Jesus and, possibly, His Mother in order to undermine this tendency and focus our attention on God's compassionate love for us.



Prepare yourself by recalling that you are about to spend time with Jesus. Decide how long you wish to spend in prayer. It may help to use your imagination for a prayerfully encounter with Christ. Read a passage of scripture that will enable you to compose the scene where an encounter will take place (e.g. the Woman at the Well *John 4: 4-15*; the Man born Blind seeking sight *Matt.20: 29-34*). Read the passage, slowly, once or twice.

Then, in your imagination, notice the place where this compassionate encounter is to take place.

- Sit in a chair that will hold your back firmly but in a relaxed manner, or use a meditation stool;
- Allow your senses to be present to the place you have adopted);
- Gently close your eyes and, for a few moments, breathe slowly – breath in the love of God and breath out whatever you need to let go of;
- Notice what thoughts/ideas/concerns etc. may fill your attention. Acknowledge them and try to place them behind you – let go of them whenever they begin to attract you again.
- Imagine approaching the place where you will encounter. Notice the scene through all your senses. It may be at the well or in a crowd. For example, Jesus is speaking to the blind man at the side of the road.

- Feel the hot sun beating down. Smell the dust kicked up by the passers-by. Feel the clothing you're wearing, the sweat rolling down you, a rumble of hunger. See the look in the blind man's face and hear the hope in his words. Note the irritation of the disciples. Above all watch Jesus—the way he walks, his gestures, the look in his eyes, the expression on his face. Hear him speak the words that are recorded in the Gospel. Go on to imagine other words he might have spoken or actions he may have taken;
- Then imagine Jesus approach you – with a kindly, compassionate expression. Let yourself become aware that the concern He had for the blind man, He has for you. He wants to heal you, forgive you – love you. He wants to hold you in a compassionate embrace.

*If you find it impossible to imagine the scene, then either recall times when you have experienced compassion recall the feeling of being loved or sense someone holding you, lovingly. In a spirit of generosity, pray as you are able; don't try to force it. Be sure that God will speak to you, whether through your memory, understanding, intellect, emotions, or imagination;*

- Sense the loving kindness that Jesus has for you. Allow yourself to be held in that compassionate gaze. Relish it. Let it seep through your defences and notice any resistance there may be. (It may help if you allow Mary to be present and to realise that she, too, has compassion for you);
- If you realise your attention wander \*, bring it back to this encounter;
- If you can, begin to tell Jesus what lies in your heart. Open it to Him and express whatever you want to say. Listen to any sense of a response;

As the time you have set comes to an end, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes quietly letting the experience settle into you. Finally, express your gratitude for the way you are held in God's compassionate gaze in words such as:

*May the centre of my being, be one with the Heart of Christ. Amen.*

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*(\* When engaged with your thoughts\*, return ever-so gently to the scene thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections)*