



Ignatian Contemplation

Ignatian Contemplation is all about imaginative prayer. Saint Ignatius gave us *lectio divina*, and another of his favorite ways to pray with Scripture was to use imaginative prayer by entering into the Scripture story to make it come alive!

We can do this too, by taking on a character in the story or by becoming an innocent bystander and using the five senses to see the sights, smell the smells, taste the tastes, and feel the feels of “being there,” in the story.

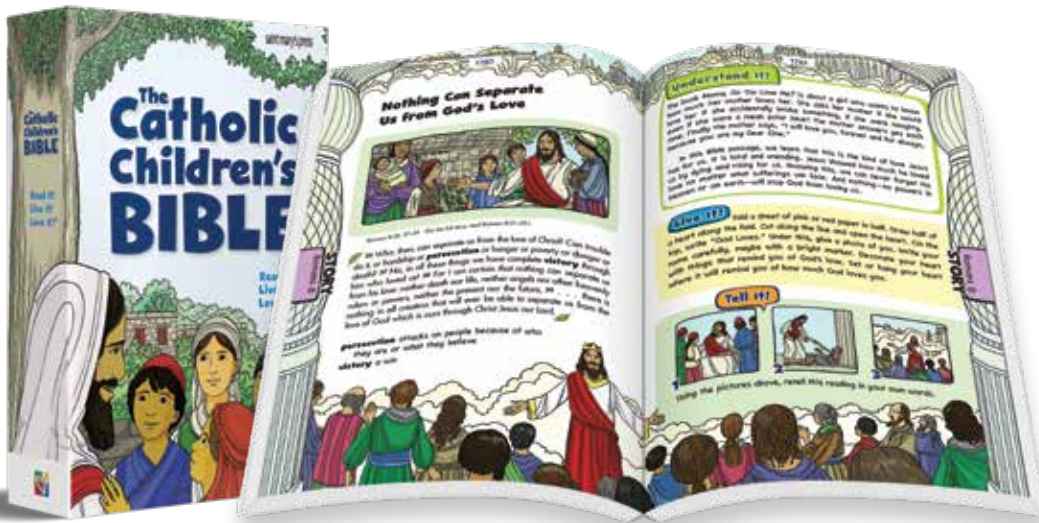
The goal is to pay close attention to the experience and how it moves and speaks to us, so that we can hear and explore God’s message for us, in a very present way, so that we can live it.

Scripture already uses things that connect with children:

- stories
- images and imaginings
- vivid and bold characters
- a meaningful message

Scripture allows us to LISTEN TO and EXPERIENCE God.

Ignatian contemplation furthers this experience for participants by quieting their bodies, focusing their minds, and engaging their imaginations. The key is to keep the contemplation short—10 minutes with the little ones, up to 20 minutes with older children and teens.



To learn more
about *The Catholic
Children's Bible*,
visit smp.org/ccb

A Step-by-Step Process:

1. Select a Scripture story that has a descriptive setting, bold characters, and a message you want to further explore with the children. *If using *The Catholic Children's Bible*, you could use one of the Featured Stories. Use the full story, noted by the green leaves, found on pages before and sometimes after the Featured Story pages.
2. Introduce the story to the children and explore its characters, setting, and meaning.
3. Prepare the children for the experience:
 - a. Get the wiggles out first! Give them 30 seconds to be silly—to wiggle and giggle.
 - b. Direct them to sit or lie down on the floor on their backs, uncrossing their arms and legs.
 - c. Explain the process (quieting the body and focusing the mind) and the goal of this experience of prayer (to pay close attention to the experience and how it moves and speaks to you, so that God's message for you is heard and explored, in a very present way, so that it can be lived).
 - d. Begin by having the children focus on their breathing, then on areas of the body that may be tense: the forehead, neck and shoulders, arms, hands, core, legs, and feet. Ask them to tense the muscles in each of these areas, scanning the body, and to release those muscles, and breathe—breathing out the tension and the worries and breathing in the breath of God. This is our way of preparing ourselves to be as open and attentive to God in this experience.
 - e. Invite the children to enter into the story, to use their imaginations to become a character, an innocent bystander, or a bird flying above, hearing and watching all that is happening.
 - f. Describe the scene before reading the story. For example, if you are by Lake Gannessaret, have the children feel the breeze coming off of the water and hearing the ripples made in the water, and the sun warming their face.
4. Now, slowly read the Scripture story aloud, pausing in appropriate places for the children to engage their imaginations and experience the story.
5. When finished, slowly awaken the children by asking them to become aware that they are back in the room, to feel the floor beneath them, to stretch out, and to slowly open their eyes. Then have them slowly sit up, if they are lying down.
6. Ask the children to share about their experience: What did they see, hear, feel, smell, taste (if there was eating and drinking involved)? What character were they in the story? What was it like to meet God in this way? What message do they think God has for them through this Scripture story experience? Explore that with them and brainstorm ideas as to how they might respond to God's message.
7. End with a prayer of gratitude to God.

