

## Using Art in Our Spiritual Lives

In addition to finding God in all things, another important theme in Ignatian spirituality is imaginative prayer with the application of our five senses. In praying certain passages from Scripture—especially scenes from the life of Jesus Christ—Ignatius invites us to imagine we are participants within the scriptural scene and to imagine the scene using our five senses. That brings to mind many questions: Who am I in the scene—a disciple? Are my hands and arms sore from rowing the boat? How does the wine taste? What is it like to go from blindness to sight? What is the tone of voice being spoken? What aromas fill the air while eating with tax collectors?

An additional part of this prayer process is to be aware of our interior movements while engaging in imaginative prayer. For example, how did I feel being a disciple? With this kind of imaginative prayer and attentiveness to our interior movements, much fruit can be discovered in understanding our relationship with God, self, and others. And this form of imaginative prayer works very well with all forms of art—not just the ones that depict scenes from scripture.

Imagine standing before a Jackson Pollock painting. One way of entering into this painting is to consider how the splatter mark-making and colors appeal to your five senses. While engaging those senses, maybe you begin to notice you feel anxious due to the apparent chaos on the canvas—what do you want to do? Do you seek to avoid chaos and go look at a different painting or sculpture? Do you allow yourself to be challenged by feeling anxious in the face of this chaos? What are your life-patterns in how you deal with feelings of anxiety and chaos? Do you turn to prayer during such times?

For me, I may think of Genesis 1 and the chaotic wasteland with a wind moving over the waters. Maybe, if I remain with this painting long enough, the anxiety I feel slowly gives way to a still and quiet spirit, something that surprises me from this encounter with Pollock's work. By being open and attentive to finding God in all things and by engaging imaginative prayer, art can draw us more deeply into our hearts and minds—and into an encounter with God. Let us pray for the grace to have eyes that see and ears that hear the stirrings of God's Spirit within such encounters so that we respond in love.

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We all have two parts to our brains, which are not separate but actually connected.

The left side of our brains handle the following:

- logic
- sequencing
- linear thinking
- mathematics
- facts
- thinking in words

The right brain is more visual and intuitive. It's sometimes referred to as the analog brain. It has a more creative and less organized way of thinking. It handles the following:

- imagination
- holistic thinking
- intuition
- arts
- rhythm
- nonverbal cues
- feelings visualization
- daydreaming

Both sides of our brains are amazing and necessary. Art helps us to engage the right side of our brains which can translate to knowing God in an experiential way that of course, leads to greater intimacy. It is not the only way of encountering God. We encounter Him with the left side of our brains as well. Using both is healthy and balanced.

In Still we will use art that depicts scriptures but we will also use common pictures to hear God's movement in our lives.