



IMAGINATION MATTERS

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LET'S START BY REVIEWING STANDARD CATALOGUES OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES:

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . .

In Christian tradition the seven heavenly virtues combine the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude with the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

The seven capital virtues, also known as remedial virtues, are those opposite the seven deadly sins: chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility.



What if we added imagination?

Will you serve God with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

—*From Presbyterian ordination commitment*



Consider the parables . . .

Imagine each of them beginning with “Imagine, if you will . . .”



A man who had two sons

A wounded Samaritan

A sower in a field

A woman who has lost a coin

A thirsty man in hell

A rich man building barns

A house sliding on sand

What Jesus does in teaching is repeatedly invite and invoke imagination.

He doesn't deal in abstractions, but in images. He knows our needs.

As earthly creatures our understanding is incarnational. We dream and think largely in images.

The ignatian exercises or way of prayer are rooted in imagination as the faculty that opens the way to contemplation. By imagination we “enter into the vision of God.”

For example...

Imagine God looking upon a turbulent world and sending help.

Imagine being present in a scene from the Gospels—at Jesus’ side, at the back of the crowd, at the well, in the circle of men about to stone a woman . . .

Imagine Jesus or an angel at the site of one of today’s news stories—a shooting, a train wreck, a rescue of refugees at sea, a detention center.

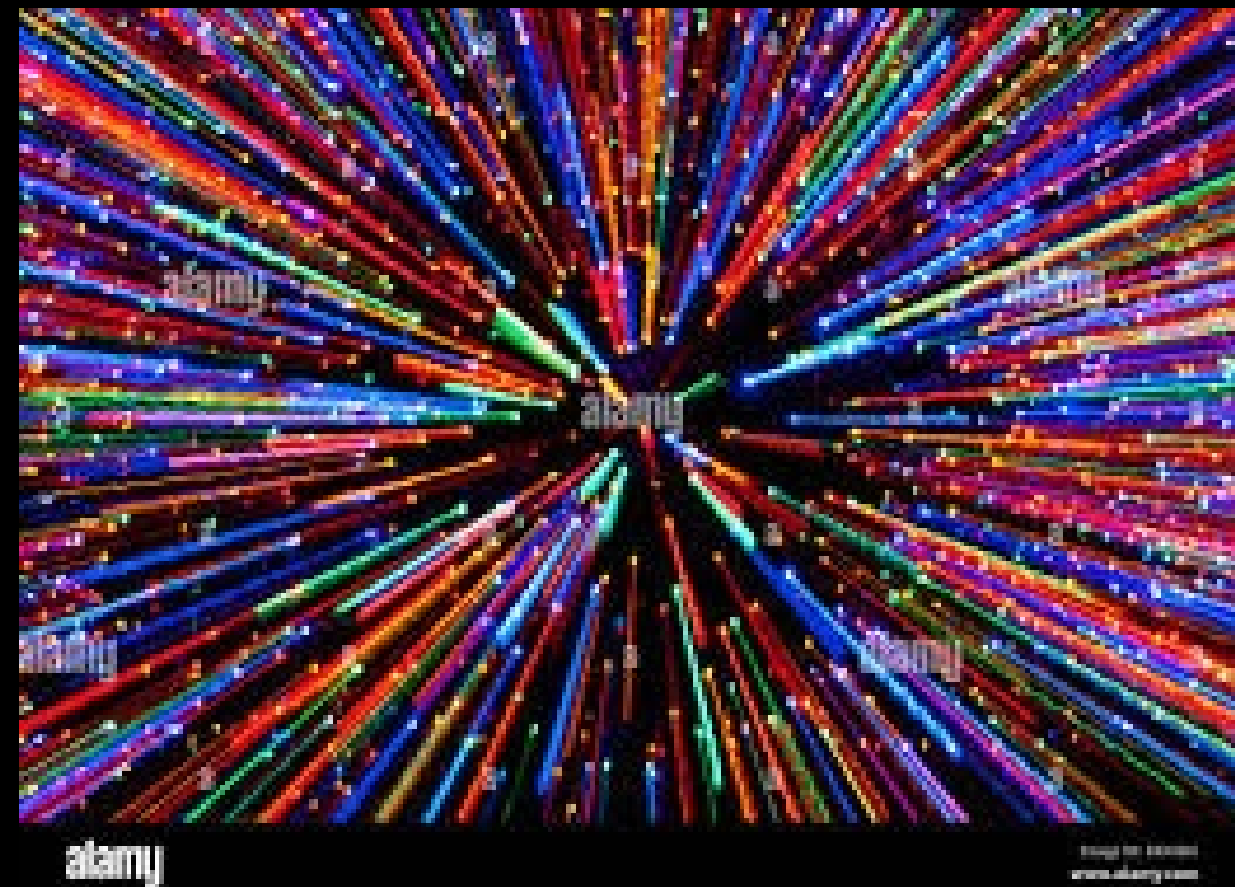
Consider how compassion as well as contemplation begins in imagination.



The longer we live the more opportunities we have to reimagine . . .

Family
Friendship
Beauty
Satisfaction
Self
God





“What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present...”

Consider what value there may be for us in considering . . .

What might have been

What might still be

What could be

What isn't likely to be, but is an interesting “thought experiment”



“She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine.
That if they could not see it, they would not have it.

From Baby Suggs’ sermon to escaped slaves in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*

A FEW EXERCISES IN RE-IMAGINING

Imagine from your widened perspective now . . .

What you might claim now that you have less to protect or fear or lose

How you might surprise the young people in your life into reconsidering something

How you might design an altar or sacred space for yourself that would become a source of consolation and satisfaction

A letter of support, consolation, or gentle instruction you might send to someone in public office

How and where you might serve as a “non-anxious presence” or model peace

Where and how you might introduce the gift of music or art into spaces or gatherings that need them

Imagination is more important than knowledge. — Einstein

Everything you can imagine is real. — Picasso

If you don't imagine, nothing ever happens at all. — John Greene

You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus. — Mark Twain

The Power of the Christian Imagination



J.R.R. Tolkien



Toni Morrison



C.S. Lewis



Denise Walker



Flannery O'Connor



Imagination requires boldness

Imagination is a prerequisite to compassion, patience, endurance

Imagination allows escape and enables meaningful engagement

Imagination explores the what if, the might have been, the might be, could be, the why not...

Imagination begins: How can I know what I think till I see what I say?



A BENEDICTION

May we see one another truly—
as we are and as we could become

May we serve God and each other
With energy, intelligence, imagination, and love

May we stay open to the play of the Spirit
With whom all things are possible.

