

Role of Imagination Second Week of Advent Saturday, December 16, 2017 8:15 AM
Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; **Mt 17:9a, 10-13** (We have to use our imaginations taking Scripture and trying to find how this works now in our lives.)

“Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.”

The theme of today’s gospel lesson is **the role of imagination in the life of faith**. Elijah was a real person; he really existed centuries before Christ. There was a story about him, there were actually many stories about him, but one in particular is very unusual that he was taken up into the sky in a chariot, a fiery chariot. This led to **the expectation that Elijah would return to announce the coming of the Messiah**.

Now today the disciples are questioning Jesus about this expectation. It wasn’t exactly a prophecy; it was an expectation taught by the rabbis. So Jesus said, oh that’s true. Oh by the way, it’s already happened. **He is applying in his imagination this expectation to John the Baptist**. Of course John the Baptist wasn’t really Elijah. But Jesus’ point is well **we could imagine him filling this role**. And so it is **our imaginations have to be at work to interpret Scripture**. We can’t take it literally. **We have to imagine what its real meaning is and how it’s actually being fulfilled**.

Now imagination is both good and bad; it is a great blessing and it is a curse. I’ve met many people who are cursed with imaginary fears, imaginary anxieties, imaginary terrors. They are actually terrified about nothing real; it’s only their imagination. Now modern science comes by and says oh well we have studied brains, and these people have all these problems and we realize that depressed people lack this chemical; people with anxiety have too much of this chemical, which all may be true, but it’s not the point. **The lack of this chemical or the excess of that chemical may be the result of something rather than the cause. As is so often the case the cause is the imagination itself**, a powerful, creative force for good and for evil, for health and for ill, for good and for bad.

So we have to use our imaginations in a good way, a holy, a wholesome way, a positive way. **We have to use our imaginations taking Scripture and trying to find how this works now in our lives**. That’s what Jesus did in today’s story. And these stories are given us for our benefit. They are models for us. We are not supposed to just read them; we are supposed to do them.