

# FREE CHRISTMAS DAY RESOURCE

The Educational Center PO BOX 11892, Charlotte, NC 28220

www.educationalcenter.org ~ INFO@EDUCATIONALCENTER.ORG ~ 704.375.1161

## Imagination As Spiritual Practice

On the *Spirituality and Practice* website Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat define imagination as spiritual practice with these words:

In the spiritual life, imagination has two meanings. First, it is a human faculty—the part of us that traffics in images, symbols, myths, and stories. It is the capacity we all have for innovative thinking and creative expression. Second, the imagination is an inner reality, a boundless realm not defined by our senses or reason, that we know from our dreams and can enter via certain exercises while awake. The practice of imagination encourages us to use this faculty and enables us to explore the realm.

Begin by learning the language of imagination. Keep track of the images that come to you spontaneously in association with your feelings and thoughts. Draw pictures of what you encounter in your dreams. Contemplate art and see yourself as part of the picture. Read myths and tell stories. Remember, through the ages spiritual pilgrims have found that it is possible to step into the inner realm of imagination. There you can find fuel for your journey and gifts of wisdom.

We invite you to journey alongside the characters of Christmas this Christmas Day and imagine what it might be like to break all the rules, make outrageous choices, throw caution to the wind one moment and run for your life at another. We invite you to follow stars and listen to your dreams. We invite you to entertain heavenly hosts and drop everything that seems important to visit a baby you don't even know. We invite you to venture into the glory-filled darkness of a long winter's night. We invite you to gestate, birth, adore, bring gifts to and protect the sacred Christ that longs to dwell among us, between us, and within us.

### DECEMBER 25

#### Matthew 2:13-23

*Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."*

*When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:*

*"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."*

*When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.*

*But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."*

## EXPLORE THE TEXT THROUGH ART:



### ***Landscape with the Flight Into Egypt* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1563 (Source: Wikimedia.org)**

Bruegel primarily created religious paintings. Many are indicators of the influence of Biblical proverbs. Some scholars believe that Bruegel satirized the folly and sinfulness of human kind. It is speculated that he viewed organized religion as an obstacle between God and mankind.

A friend of Bruegel's is quoted as saying, "Bruegel set out to entertain and instruct with his paintings. He succeeded admirably, and created a window in both a visual and a moral sense." A window to some world. Painting began as a desire to access meaning in the world around us. And to connect to that meaning in a tangible way. Bruegel's work then becomes a 'portal' into another aspect of reality.

1. Many of the images we have explored in this series have been intimate in scope. In considering this image, ask yourself: what kind of space do the characters occupy?
2. How might the artist indicate his idea of the enormity of Joseph and Mary's undertaking?
3. We are often told that each journey begins with a single step. Yet here, our characters are in the middle of the visual field. Where have they come from? Where are they going?
4. What is the general feeling of the painting in terms of color?
5. How does the use of red affect you as you look at this image?
6. Identify a time in your life when the journey felt enormous and overwhelming? Who or what led you through those times?
7. Name a part of yourself that feels like it's on a daunting and dangerous journey into foreign territory.

EXCERPTED FROM *CHARACTERS OF CHRISTMAS* (available in our website store: adult resources)