

Ask of Your Loving Father God (Matthew 7:7-11)

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Guidelines: Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts.

Ignatian Meditation Process: Ignatius focuses on personally experiencing God's grace through Christ (as in this Gospel reading), especially in Week 1 of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Read the introduction and then "Ask for the grace". Then quietly read the passage by using your imagination to enter into the story, sensing and feeling what's going on. Don't analyze the passage or seek insights — *experience yourself as a character in the story*. After the second reading have a "colloquy" (short, personal conversation) with the Lord. You can use the prompts and questions at the bottom to guide your prayer time and journaling (and sharing with others).

Introduction: In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches us that a good person is not defined by outward appearance but acts with a heart of love for others. Along these lines, he teaches us not to judge others and not to push our "pearls" of wisdom on them, but instead to ask clearly for what we need. Many of us are afraid to be so vulnerable and direct. Ultimately, this has to do with our relationship with God. In fact, the most important thing about us is that we trust in God as a loving Father and are vulnerable to ask him for what we need.

Ask For the Grace: Lord Jesus, I ask for the grace I desire: a more personalized experience of God's grace that brings me spiritual relish and fruit.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Matthew 7 (MSG)

7-11 "Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think [your Father] God who conceived you in love will be even better?"

1st Reading: Visualize yourself in the Gospel passage. Don't seek intellectual insights — stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?

2nd Reading: Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?