

Jesus Overcomes Satan's Temptations (Matthew 4:1-11)

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Guidelines (For Groups): Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts.

Ignatian Meditation Process: Ignatius chose this Gospel reading for Week 2 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: Immediately after his baptism Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by Satan. He prepared for his battle with forty days of solitary prayer, fasting, and meditation on Scripture. He was training for his public ministry, praying about his mission and methodology. When the Devil tempted him Jesus defeated all three of his schemes. The serpent kept striking at Jesus in these ways in the years to come, but each time the Master, with help from angels, was victorious. Jesus shows us how to draw on his divine power through spiritual training, especially relying on Scripture, in order to resist the Devil's deceitful attacks and chose to worship and serve God alone.

Ask For the Grace: Dear God, my supreme and truthful Commander, I ask for the grace I desire: for insight and power to guard against the deceits of the evil leader and to imitate Jesus.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Matthew 4 (MSG)

1-3 Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: "Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread."

4 Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

5-6 For the second test the Devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple and said, "Since you are God's Son, jump." The Devil goaded him by quoting Psalm 91: "He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so that you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone."

7 Jesus countered with another citation from Deuteronomy: "Don't you dare test the Lord your God."

8-9 For the third test, the Devil took him to the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, "They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours."

10 Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

11 The Test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs.

1st Reading: Visualize yourself in the Gospel story. 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?