

Jesus' Visit to the Temple at Age Twelve (Luke 2:41-52)

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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: Jesus' childhood years are a mystery to us, except that Luke tells us that he grew in wisdom, stature and grace. He illustrates this with the story of Jesus' visit to the temple at twelve years old, which seems to be his rite of passage into spiritual adulthood. (A twelve year old in that day and culture was typically far more educated and mature than is true today.) Consider Jesus' independence from his parents, his intimacy with his Father God, his courage to dialogue with learned religious leaders, and his great wisdom. Consider that when his parents are so upset with him he speaks the truth in love to them. Mary holds Jesus dearly and deeply within herself — we're blessed if we do the same.

Ask For the Grace: Lord Jesus, I ask for the grace I desire: to know you more intimately, to love you more intensely, and to follow you more closely.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Luke 2 (MSG)

41-45 Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbors. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him.

46-48 The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you."

49-50 He said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" But they had no idea what he was talking about.

51-52 So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people.

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?