we journey with Jesus, we find we can overcome those temptations because our relationship with the Father, like Jesus', is stronger than our selfishness. We discover that, like Jesus, we are nourished and affirmed, and we find ourselves in that relationship. This manifests our call as companions of the Christ.

Questions for Prayer and Reflection

1. What happens when you read and contemplate the temptations of Christ in the desert?
2. What are your deserts? in your work? your family? your relationships? the society you live in? the world?
3. Is there a pattern to the way you are tempted?
4. How does the prayer affect the way you encounter temptation and deal with it?
5. What have been the consequences in your life of falling in love with God and allowing God to express his love for you?
6. What have been the consequences of not falling in love with God and of ignoring his relationship with you?
7. How does your intimacy with God express itself in your daily life?
8. How do you distinguish between being pious and being spiritual in your life?

13th Exercise: The Call

Scripture verse

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

From the Spiritual Exercises

If a devout soul wishes to do something ... that may be for the glory of God our Lord, there may come a thought or temptation from without not to say or do it. Apparent reasons may be adduced for this, such that it is motivated by vainglory or some such other imperfect intention, etc. ... He should act against the temptation. According to St. Bernard, we must answer the tempter, "I did not undertake this because of you, and I am not going to relinquish it because of you." (Sp. Ex. #351)

Grace to be prayed for

This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely. (Sp. Ex. #104)

The Nature of a Call

In the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus discerns how to behave in the world and returns to the world with that knowledge. He knows he is in communion with the Father and has the support of his family and friends. He knows he is not alone. But he realizes that if he is to share the mercy of the Father with the world, he needs others who are like him – who have seen the misery of this world and have encountered the traps and illusions the world uses to ensnare people. He needs others, who, like him, seek to do something, however
small, to relieve that burden of mindless suffering, to enlighten the deceived, and to celebrate the life that comes from knowing one is rooted in love. First he calls people he trusts. Interestingly, he does not approach religious figures, but ordinary people, like you and me.

Each of us is, at the root of our being, a manifestation of love. It is our identity and we experience a sense of it only when we are in loving relationships. But, as we all know, there are levels to loving. There is the love that is not expressed, and there is the love that is expressed. After that there is the love expressed and received. Then there is the love shared. Finally, there is the love that is the expression and work of that shared love. Our call emerges when the love that is given to us is received, lived out, shared, and acted upon. Every call contains the forces of attraction, response, engagement, and commitment.

If we look at what we do with our life, we will see we live this way because of a call. Our behaviour is a response to that call. It may be a basic call to survival. It may be difficult or monotonous, but we endure it because we care about our family, or a particular cause, or a particular talent. Every call shows itself in what we value, because what we value is where we put our lives.

The call of Jesus to his disciples, and to each of us, asks us to put our lives beyond ourselves in trusting in a relationship with him. When we enter into that relationship, we are given a deeper access to the Father’s mercy. But, like every relationship, it contains an element of risk. We give up our security to achieve our authenticity.

An Authentic Call

There is a story of an acrobat in a small circus whose single act was to walk a tightrope without a safety net. Above the middle of the high wire was suspended a ring made of rope, soaked in gasoline and set alight. At times he would climb the ladder to the roll of the drums and start his walk, only to turn back. The crowds would jeer. At other times, he would leap through the flaming circle. He said he was always scared, and the times he turned back were when his fear got the better of him. But when asked why he would attempt it in the first place, his answer was simple. He would say, “I know my life is on the other side.”

When we follow our call, we give up our security, because our life is on the other side, in the living out of that call.

But how do we know we are called? In fact, we are called by many things, so the question is knowing what is the right call. A true call engages us fully, carries us beyond ourselves. It connects us, on a whole range of levels, with a reality that is both inviting and mysterious, compassionate and uncompromising. It is profoundly personal. It brings out the best in us and gives us a new and more realistic understanding of ourselves. But in answering a call, we also face our demons, as Christ did in the desert: we learn our limitations. We begin to appreciate what is given to us on our path and to be grateful for that path and for the companions and adventures we have along that way.

So how can we distinguish a true call? By the fidelity of the One who calls us. That One is true to our relationship in good times and in bad; does not judge us as anything less than lovable and capable of loving; respects our individuality; celebrates with us what is good in life; works along with us in transforming what is damaging in our world; gives us the strength and the courage to hold what is suffering or damaged; lets us experience our freedom to be creative. The one who calls us truly shares with us all that he has and is. When we are called by Christ, he shares with us the life and spirit he has with the compassionate and creative mystery he calls “Abba” … “Father.”

Questions for Prayer and Reflection

1. When have you felt called to do something that you saw as significant? What were the stages of that experience? Looking back, what affirmed you? How did they happen? What forces worked against you? How did they manifest themselves? How did you overcome them?

2. Do the same exercise for two or three other significant life-changing experiences. Can you see a common pattern in the way you are called and the way you respond?
3. Read the call of apostles in the gospels (John ch. 1; Mark ch. 1; Luke ch. 5; Matthew ch. 4). Enter prayerfully and imaginatively into one of those scenes, giving the characters and yourself the freedom to say and do as they and you wish. What was significant in that scene for you?

4. Who in your world lives out such a calling within a family (such as a parent), a job (such as an artist), the community (such as an advocate for human rights), the international scene (such as a world leader), or a religious tradition (such as a saint, the Buddha, Rumi)? Have a conversation with that person about what moves you and what moved them to lead such a life.

5. Are you experiencing a call now? What form does it take? What are you doing about it?

6. In what ways are you a witness to life for others?

7. Not all of us are asked to be religious, but we are all spiritual by nature. In what ways does your intimacy with the spiritual manifest itself?

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**14th Exercise: The Cost of Discipleship**

**Scripture verse**

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's sake will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? (Mark 8:34-36)

**From the Spiritual Exercises**

They will strive to conduct themselves as if every attachment ... had been broken. They will make efforts neither to want that, or anything else, unless the service of God our Lord alone moves them to do so. (Sp. Ex. #155)

**Grace to be prayed for**

This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely. (Sp. Ex. #104)

**The Challenge of Living Authentically**

A script we sometimes buy into suggests that implementing decisions is easy. But this is not so. Often the values of the world deride the decisions we make because this world's illusions are fickle and superficial. When we make a radical decision, even though we still live in the world, we do not live as the world proposes we live. For example, to enter into a life commitment flies in the face of overwhelming self-indulgence; to love what is broken transcends the lure of perfectionism; to believe in the power of truth destroys the convenient lie; to live spiritually exposes the shallowness of the materialism that surrounds us.

**The Poor in Spirit**

A call invites us to a deeper relationship with the divine. As we discovered in the First Week, when we encounter the divine personally