

THE EXAMEN – THE IGNATIAN REVIEW OF THE DAY

The Examen, or Review of the Day, is a daily prayer which St Ignatius included in his Spiritual Exercises. It offers a practical process to become more attentive to God's presence and activity in our daily life, finding God in all things, and noticing the patterns of our interaction with God in our experiences.

The Examen is a good prayer for busy people - it takes only ten minutes at some point in the day – bedtime, before breakfast, at lunch, before bed. It is perhaps the most important ten minutes in the whole of the day! It is asking God to show us moments of the day that God invites us to pay attention to.

STEP ONE: ACT OF PRESENCE

I place myself in God's presence.

I quiet myself. After I am settled, I direct my attention to God. I recall that this wonderful God is ever present and attentive to me. In my own words, I welcome God. Then I briefly offer myself back to God

STEP TWO: ACT OF THANKSGIVING AND GRATITUDE

I give thanks for God's great love for me.

I take a moment to thank God for my life, for my own person, and particularly for this day in my life. I want to become more grateful for the gifts and blessings of my day.

STEP THREE: ASKING FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

I ask for the grace to understand how God is acting in my life and to accept all of who I am.

I ask the Holy Spirit for:

- The light to see clearly what God wants me to notice from my day, what in me is in harmony with God and what undermines my relationship with God
- The gift of accepting myself as I am, trusting that the Holy Spirit is active in both the graced parts and sinful parts of myself, that God loves me and works in me and through both parts.

STEP FOUR: REVIEWING THE PAST 24 HOURS

- *I review the day and recall specific moments and my feelings at the time. I reflect on what I did, said, or thought in those instances. Was I drawing closer to God, or further away?*
- **I review my day.** I walk through the past 24 hours from task to task, person to person, and thank God for the life I have experienced. I let the Lord Jesus show me where he was present and active in me and in others, where God's Spirit was obviously blessing me with gifts: work, relationships, challenges or in some event

that made me happy, and where God's Spirit was less obvious: the experience of failure, of being discouraged or tempted.

- **I take note of my feelings.** I recall how I felt as I reviewed my day: angry, sad, happy, afraid, anxious. These feelings reveal where God's Spirit is moving in me and where those influences contrary to God are active.
- **I focus on the strongest feeling.** I focus on the feeling, whatever it is – whether “good” or “bad”, that most caught my attention. This feeling reveals that something important is happening in my relationship. Is it leading toward God or away from God? I talk with God about this and ask for insight. If my attention to this feeling is leading toward God, I give thanks or praise for it. If it is leading me away from God, I ask for the grace of conversion, to see the attitude or value underneath the feeling and the ability to re-orient myself.

STEP FIVE: LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT 24 HOURS

I look toward tomorrow. I think of how I might collaborate more effectively with God's plan.

- As I look forward to the next 24 hours, I ask God to be present to me and through me with God's love and support. I also ask for the openness and courage that disposes me to recognize and accept the Lord's surprises: unanticipated joys, unexpected meetings, new ways of approaching others or something that is difficult for me. I ask that I not be so set on my plans that I cannot be open to God in the way or in the person who comes to me in unexpected ways.
- I may need to ask God for strength to overcome something that I fear or dread, maybe to persevere in something, to be more sensitive to God's activity in my life, maybe to let go of something or someone, to love more, to be converted in some relationship, to accept the “thorn in my flesh”. Perhaps I will ask for help and guidance, for deeper love and care, or for greater trust and courage.
- I will conclude with an Our Father.

In the beginning, you may frequently refer to the outlined steps. As you become more comfortable you will find less need to refer to the guide at all.