

The Examen Prayer¹

The Structure of the Prayer

St. Ignatius Loyola developed the Examen prayer for those going through his spiritual exercises, though it can be used by anyone. The prayer should be said at least at the end of each day. The prayer has four steps: **Gratitude, Review, Forgiveness and Renewal**. It is not to be confused with the examination of conscience. It is more like an examination of consciousness in which you are becoming attune to the ways the presence of God reverberates through your feelings, desires, and thoughts.

The Examen prayer is designed to deepen your sense of God's generous love in your daily life. It keeps you in touch with how Christ tries to influence you and move you to do the next good thing. This prayer helps you to see when you were cooperating with Christ and when you did not. It makes you more attune to the desires of the risen Lord and helps you discover your daily role in his mission.

Let me describe each step in this prayer: Gratitude, Review, and Renewal.

Gratitude

The examen begins as a prayer of gratitude. Quiet yourself down and recognize you are in the presence of God. Then recall the events of the past 24 hours remembering where you were, what you did, and who you were with. In that short period of time God has given you gifts great and small. Food, a home, a good night's sleep, friends, family, exercise, or a productive day at work are all gifts from God you may receive on a daily basis. Most of them you take for granted! As you remember the events of the past 24 hours, give thanks to God for all you were given. As you thank God for these gifts realize it is all from God to you.

Review

After the prayer of gratitude, Ignatius asks us to review that same period of time but on a deeper level. He wants us to notice where the Spirit of Christ was at

¹ The approach to the Examen Prayer used in this manual is inspired the work of Timothy Gallagher. *The Examen Prayer*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2006.

work in our day and how we responded. Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where Christ was in your day. Then recall what mood you were in at different times during the past 24 hours and notice what thoughts influenced you. The Spirit of Christ is found in those moods and thoughts. At times the Holy Spirit may fill you with energy, inspiration, and insights in order to serve Christ. At other times the Spirit you may be filled with remorse for not cooperating with Christ. At other times you may experience an increase in your faith, a sense of God's presence, or a quiet peace. Just notice these signs of God's presence.

Forgiveness

As you review the day you may need to ask Christ for forgiveness or freedom so you can better cooperate with him tomorrow. Imagine Christ standing beside you and allow yourself to experience his forgiveness and freedom.

Renewal

After looking back on the past 24 hours, St. Ignatius has you consider the day ahead. Think about your "to-do" list. With all those tasks in mind, ask the risen Jesus what he wants you to do and how he wants you to do it. Wait, listen he may reorder your list or propose something you forgot! Set about your day intent on doing what the Lord has asked you to do.

Close with the Our Father