

# THE DAILY EXAMEN

## IN 6 SIMPLE STEPS

St. Ignatius of Loyola is a great saint for our busy and over-scheduled lives . . . . .



His first followers ran into the problem of not being able to pray often throughout the day. So, St. Ignatius recommended a practice called **the Examen** – an introspective prayer done at the end of the day:

### 1. FIND A QUIET PLACE



Go to a place where your phone, the Internet, television, family, or work won't bother you. You might even think about a quiet spot – maybe a peaceful lakefront, a secluded room – to help you center yourself for prayer. Your posture should be comfortable, but attentive. You're about to try to pay more careful attention to the events of your daily life, so don't curl up and go to...Zzzzz.

### 2. IDENTIFY A MOMENT OF GRATITUDE



Can you name one moment that you are grateful for today? Remember how you felt in that moment. Notice those feelings and simply be grateful for them, knowing that all gifts come from God.

### 3. ASK FOR FREEDOM

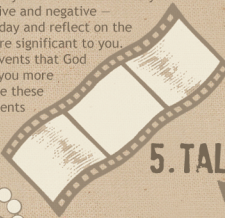


Freedom is one of the main components of Catholic spirituality. When we say freedom we don't mean doing whatever we want. We long for freedom from the things that often trip us up, distract us, or bias our judgments. We pray that the Holy Spirit gives us vision to be free of those things, so we can see the events of our life as they are – not how we'd like things to be or even, how we experienced them to be complete with our own prejudices. For example:

*"I MIGHT HAVE A FIGHT WITH MY BEST FRIEND AND BELIEVE THAT HE PURPOSEFULLY HURT ME. WHEN I LOOK AT THIS MORE DEEPLY, I FIND THAT I, TOO, SAID HURTFUL WORDS THAT LED HIM TO REACT BADLY. THIS DOESN'T EXCUSE HIS BEHAVIOR BUT IT NOTES MY ROLE IN THE RELATIONSHIP."*

### 4. REVIEW YOUR DAY

Try to recall the events of the past day as if you were watching a movie. What happened when you woke up, ate lunch, or traveled home from school or work? Who did you encounter? Notice your feelings – positive and negative – throughout the day and reflect on the moments that are significant to you. These are the events that God is trying to tell you more about – examine these significant moments more deeply.



### 5. TALK WITH GOD

Tell God anything that is on your mind. You might express gratitude for something that you were consoled by. You might ask for forgiveness for a moment where you didn't meet expectations. You might look for God's assistance for a particular trouble. Whatever the case, this is your time to be with God, who already knows your needs. Our prayer exists to change us, not to change God. This is our moment to be proactive in seeing who God most wants us to be.



### 6. FINISH YOUR PRAYER

End your time of prayer with an Our Father (or a similar prayer that you like).

## PATTERNS:

When the Examen is done over time, we begin to see the patterns of consolation (times when you feel most alive, energized, and connected to God) and desolation (when you feel God's absence or perhaps hopelessness). For example: You might find whenever you are with a particular person you are amazingly energized or perhaps she/he is. That may lead you to develop a deeper relationship with that person. Or you might notice that when you are doing a particular task at work you become filled with energy and vision and find your work to be stellar. You can focus your energy more on these initiatives. You also might find patterns of desolation. Such as, whenever you are in a particular group you end up getting sucked into their drama and become a horrible gossip. Pay attention to your emotions in these patterns.

As we notice these patterns in our lives we begin to see that God desires us to be consoled. These moments are when we most intimately meet God who lurks in our lives hoping that we simply notice his presence in the rhythms of our day.

## TIPS:

- Start by doing the Examen for 10-15 minutes at the close of each day. Once you're comfortable with that, add a lunchtime Examen.
- Journal about your experience with the Examen. Jot down your moments of consolation and desolation and note how you feel.
- Don't stress over the details: "Am I doing this right?" "Did I forget a significant moment in my day?" God's not judging you on form. Just pray.

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