

The Daily Examen

Church Father Ignatius urged that all be taught the Examen, a daily reflection on our responses to the events of the day. The purpose of this reflection was to see God's presence and to discern God's direction for us. Ignatius believed that the key to a healthy spirituality is to find God in all things and to work constantly to cooperate with God's will.

Our responses to daily events fall into two categories: our **consolations** (what connects us with God, others, and ourselves) and **desolations** (what disconnects us). Ignatius believed that God would speak to us through these two feelings.

The Examen helps us:

- *acknowledge sad or painful feelings and hear how God is speaking to us through them.
- *overcome a pessimistic outlook by encouraging us to notice the good in each day.
- *tell the truth about who we truly are and what we need, rather than who we think we should be.
- *become aware of seemingly insignificant moments that ultimately can give direction for our lives.

Try it out!

The prayer of Examen takes about fifteen minutes, and involves three parts. Find a place you can relax and be comfortable. You may want to light a candle to remind you of the presence of God with you.

1. **Ask the Holy Spirit's guidance in looking back over the day for moments of grace.**
 - a. Ask yourself:
 - i. When did I give and receive the most love today?
 - ii. When did I feel the most alive?

- iii. When did I have the greatest sense of belonging—to myself, to others, to creation, and to God?
 - iv. If you could relive one moment, which one would it be?
 - b. Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so good.
 - c. Rest in gratitude. Receive life again from the memory of each grace-filled moment.
2. **Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart as you recall moments in the day in which you sensed the absence of grace.**
 - a. Ask yourself:
 - i. When did I feel the life draining out of me?
 - ii. When did I have the least sense of belonging?
 - iii. Where did I lack joy or peace?
 - iv. What was the low point?
 - v. When was I least able to give and receive love?
 - b. Be with whatever you feel without trying to change or fix it in any way.
 - c. Take a deep breath and acknowledge God's love for you, just as you are.
3. **Give thanks for whatever you have experienced.**
 - a. Consider where God is calling you to grow in this? Accept the gift of God's relentless tenderness.
 - b. If possible, share as much as possible of these two moments with a friend. It is also helpful to record your thoughts in a journal. Rereading these notes will help you see God's grace at work in your life even when things seemed impossible