

Daily Examen

A Daily Examen (or an Examen of Consciousness) is a prayerful method of “checking in” on how well we are living out our Christian faith on a daily basis. Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola more than four hundred years ago, the Examen invites us to reflect on how God has been present in our day, how we have responded to that presence, and how we might grow in holiness.

1. Enter God’s presence. Take a few moments to quiet down, to recall that God has accompanied you every step of the way during the day, and to open yourself to God’s presence.

2. Review the events of the day in a spirit of gratitude. Move through your day, hour by hour, taking special note of its many small gifts: the warmth of a child’s hand, a cup of coffee, a flock of birds, the kindness of a stranger. Recall that God is revealed in each of these details. Think, too, about the gifts you were able to give others: an encouraging word, a smile, work well done.

3. Pray for a “Spirit of truth.” Prepare for the next step by asking for the “Spirit of truth” to “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Prepare yourself to be honest as you examine your actions during the day, knowing that the truth will free you to grow closer to God. Recall, too, God’s unconditional love for you.

4. How were you open to God’s presence in the events of the day? Next, examine how you responded (or didn’t) to God’s presence in the key events of the day. When were you loving? When did you miss an opportunity to love? When were you were sinful? How much were you in charge of your actions, and what did you do out of simple habit? Pay attention to your emotions around these events. St. Ignatius taught that the Holy Spirit often speaks to us through our emotions, even the “negative” ones. What truth might God be leading you to through your emotions?

5. Bring it to Jesus. Finally, respond in prayer to the insights revealed in the previous steps. You may want to imagine this as a friendly face-to-face meeting with Jesus, one in which you offer words of sorrow, gratitude, or joy. You may want to ask for forgiveness, consolation, encouragement, the grace to overcome bad habits, and direction for how to grow closer. Continue to listen to Jesus as you resume your daily activities.