

The Practice of Examen

The Prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice introduced by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556 CE) that invites a deep inward reflection on each day as an exercise in noticing the movement of God, our connectedness to God throughout the day, and learning to discern the will of God. In the practice of *examen*, we seek and find God in all things of daily life. As we examine each day, we look for those moments when we felt close to God, which Ignatius describes as *consolation*. We then look for those moments in which we felt disconnected from God, defined by Ignatius as *desolation*. In both spaces, we can seek God and hear from God about God's will for us, discover the truth about who we are, and be reminded that we are ever held by a good and loving God.

This week, you are invited to close each day with the practice of *examen*. Find a quiet place, and turn off your phone and any other distractions. Light a candle and invite God to be present with you. Take some deep breaths, and settle into your body and into the quiet. Begin each practice by reviewing the day in your mind, paying attention to moments of joy, moments of confusion, moments of sadness, or moments of peace. Daily prompts for each day are listed below.

Day 1: *What brought you the most joy today? Give thanks to God. When did you feel connected to God? Give thanks to God. Did you feel sad today? Share your raw and unabridged feelings with God. Then, sit in silence and listen for God's voice reminding you that you are loved and held in grace.*

Day 2: *If you could relive a moment from today, which would it be? Where was God in this wonderful moment? What did you experience or discover about the love and grace of God today?*

Day 3: *Jesus invites us to live lightly and freely with him each day. Do you feel light and free today? If yes, what was it like to walk unburdened through the day? If no, what is needed to accept Jesus' invitation to a light and free kind of living? Listen to God in the silence of your heart about what is keeping you from freedom.*

Day 4: *Reflect on your ability to give and receive love today. Was love easy or difficult to give away? Was love easy or difficult to receive? Look for God in these moments of giving and receiving love today, and ask God to teach you more about God's generous ways of loving.*

Day 5: *Rehearse the day in your mind, pausing at each moment of gratitude to give thanks. Invite God to reset your heart, to clear away the clutter of guilt, harsh words, words left unsaid, actions taken or left undone. Let God's grace wash over the desolation and guide you to a place of consolation where you can always begin again.*

Day 6: *How is it with your soul? Listen to your body, to your feelings, and to your thoughts. Share with God how your soul is doing today. Then, listen for God's voice to speak to your heart.*

Day 7: *Reflect on the idea of wholeness. What images come to your mind? Do you feel whole? If not, what is keeping you from wholeness? If yes, how did you come to be whole, and what does it feel like? Give thanks for where you are right now on the journey and invite God to speak to your heart in the quiet.*