

Daily Examen – to be practiced at the end of the day

A great way to pray is to practice mindfulness of the divine presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of contemplative reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern God's direction for us. Ideally the practice takes 15-20 mins.

Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor and your hands resting comfortably. Pay attention to your breath – is it deep or shallow? Quick or slow? Pay attention to any tension you may be carrying in your body and breathe into the area of tension. There may be internal or external distractions through the practice. You can notice them and then let them go and re-focus on the practice.

1. Become aware of the Divine presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Invite the Spirit to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. Many great spiritual guides believe we can detect the God's presence in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Anxiety? Joy? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

The Spirit may show you some ways that you make you feel that you fell short. Make note of these areas. But look more deeply for the deeper spiritual meaning and invitation. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps invite you to consider a new direction in some area of your work or life? Does concern for a loved one or friend perhaps invite you to reach out? Are you carrying resentment – this may be an invitation to let go and not take on so much. Is there anxiety or fear you are aware of? This may be an invitation to let go and to trust divine possibility in your life. What is the deeper spiritual invitation in your emotions of the day?

4. Choose one feature of the day and meditate on it. Invite the Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pay attention to it. Hold it prayerfully. Allow prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask the Spirit to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into meditative prayer, seek the Spirit's guidance, asking for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

Amen