

The Light is ON for you

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The Examen Prayer

The Examen prayer is a beautiful practice of prayer popularised by St Ignatius of Loyola that helps us see the ways that God is moving in our daily lives. Take a few minutes of undistracted quiet in the middle of the day or evening for prayer. By regularly reflecting on our day with God's help, we commit ourselves to grow in virtue and in our relationships with God and one another.

Praying the Examen

Begin by quieting your mind and heart to be more aware of the presence of God, who is always with you. Ask God to give you the grace to see clearly the events of your day through His eyes, to experience the love He unconditionally offers you, and to listen to the guidance He shares with you.

BE THANKFUL

"Give thanks to God... for the benefits received" (St Ignatius). God loves you, and shows you love through the blessings you have already received. The good things in our life are signs and reminders that God "came so that [we] might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Our blessings can be big or small: The recovery of a sick loved one; the kind act of a stranger; or the beauty of nature, etc.

- ✦ Thinking about your day, what blessings have you received today? What good things have you experienced?
- ✦ Bring to mind the many good moments from your day.
- ✦ Pause and give thanks to God for these blessings.

ACKNOWLEDGE NEED FOR HELP

"Ask for the grace to know our sins and cast them out" (St Ignatius). Recognising our blessings, we also acknowledge that we struggle and need help. Often we experience brokenness and pain: Brokenness in the world, brokenness in our relationships, and brokenness within ourselves. That brokenness, which is not a part of God's plan, is a result of those times when we as individuals and we as humanity have chosen to turn away from God's love. Acknowledging this brokenness and need for help can be scary but it is an important step in allowing us to move through it, for God wants to create a "clean heart" for us (Psalm 51:12).

- ✦ Ask God to give you the grace and courage to face this brokenness, both in the world and within yourself, so that you can heal and grow.

REVIEW LIFE HONESTLY

"Ask account of our soul from the hour that we rose up to the present" (St Ignatius). In conversation with God pray, "God, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit and when I stand. You discern my thoughts from afar" (Psalm 139:1-3) and ask God to help you review the events of your day. As you mentally walk through the day, different moments may surface. Honestly examine each of these moments throughout your day. You may remember moments of joy – be grateful for them again. You may find moments where you recognise God's presence only in hindsight – desire to see more clearly. You may realise something good hidden in a difficult situation – trust in God's goodness even during times of struggle. And you may find moments where you turned away from God's love, where you experienced and chose to continue that brokenness – take responsibility for those times and for your role in that.

- + Review your morning, afternoon, and evening.
- + As you remember each moment, ask God: Where were you in that moment, Lord? What were you asking of me? How did I respond to you?
- + Pause to listen to God's response to these questions.

TRUST IN GOD'S FORGIVENESS

"Ask pardon from God... for the faults" (St Ignatius). As the review of your day reveals times you may have turned away from God's love, let your heart be filled with sorrow and even more of the desire to restore your relationship with God. Like the father of the lost son, God's never-ending love reaches out to welcome us when we turn back to God. No matter how you might have turned away, God wants to forgive you. Never let sorrow control you or lead you to doubt the strength of God's love for you, for "neither death, nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

- + Ask God to forgive you.
- + Trust that God does forgive you, and accept this mercy.

COMMIT TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

"To purpose amendment with [God's] grace" (St Ignatius). Renewed, turn your thoughts to the coming day with the clarity of this prayer experience so that "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

- + What lessons from this prayer can you carry into tomorrow?
- + What concrete actions can you take to grow closer to God and others?
- + Commit to live these actions, asking for God's help to do so.

Close your Examen with an Our Father, the prayer that Jesus taught us to say with confidence, or another prayer which you are moved to express at this moment.

Adapted, with thanks, from resources by the Archdiocese of Washington



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