



Daily Examen: An Introductory Exercise

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern his direction for us. It is an ancient Ignatian practice that can help us see God’s hand at work in our whole experience.

The Examen is a way of staying present in the present. Our lives can be so full without much time for reflection. When we take time to reflect on the daily movements of the heart we have the opportunity to become aware, understand, and take action based on what moves us toward God. We begin to experience an expanding awareness which lends itself to discernment.

We include it here as an invitation to begin noticing your current way of life and discerning what shifts you might want to pursue. What is working well for you today? What is challenging? Noticing our days helps us notice the patterns in our lives.

The method presented here is adapted from a technique described by Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. St. Ignatius thought that the Examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible.



01

Prepare.

Set aside time to review the day. Often this is at the end of the day to review all you’ve done. Others prefer the morning, to reflect on the previous day before stepping into this one. Some do this in three minutes; others spend more time. Whatever time you choose, remove distractions, limit your ability to be interrupted (as we can never eliminate others’ attempts to interrupt; perhaps put your phone on Do Not Disturb), and make yourself comfortable. If it’s helpful, light a candle or incense. Become aware of God’s presence.

Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.



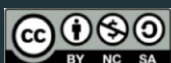
02

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.

We’d love to hear your experience of this resource. Email resilience@theseattleschool.edu, subject: Resources.



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03

Pay attention to your emotions.

One of St. Ignatius’s great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What could God be saying to you through these feelings? God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults, but look deeply for other implications. Perhaps a feeling of frustration means that God wants you to consider a new direction in some areas of your life. Perhaps concern over a friend’s behavior is a signal to reach out.

Perhaps guilt over an unwanted behavior can prompt curiosity about how that behavior served you in your need and can invite you to examine those needs. Allow God to show you ways that you are loved, seen, and valued. Notice what God might be trying to reveal to you (even about you) through moments of joy, delight, gratitude, and contentment.



04

Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

Ask the Holy 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. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Look toward tomorrow.

Ask God 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 prayer. Seek God’s guidance. Ask Christ for help and understanding. Invite the Spirit to be over you and with you. Pray for hope. St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus.

Ask for what you need: compassion, forgiveness, protection, help. Ask for wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God.



05

Consider doing this exercise with some of your trusted people.

Part of deepening faith is deepening community. Consider sharing your experiences in this exercise with a trusted person; perhaps even a monthly or weekly conversation as spiritual friends to review all you’ve been noticing in your recent examens.



06

“**H**ow we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule (or a Way of Life) defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living.”

– Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*

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