

Daily Examen

WHEN
**Midday/
End of day**

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The Examen

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, know the five steps of the Examen:

There are five steps to the Examen as it appears in the *Spiritual Exercises* (n.43) of St Ignatius Loyola:

1 Give thanks

Spend a few moments in gratitude for the gifts and blessings of the day.

2 Ask for light

Ask God to enlighten you, showing you where he has been at work and present in your day through events, people and places.

3 Examine the day

Review the events of the day, noticing what you have said, done, how you have made others feel happy or angry, encouraged or discouraged etc, the decisions you have made or not made etc. Notice which of these have led to *consolation* and what has led to *desolation* and your reactions to these events, people and places.

4 Seek forgiveness

Ask God's forgiveness for the times when you have acted, spoken or thought, decided contrary to his grace and calling for you to be his true son/daughter.

5 Resolve to change

Recognize what in your behaviour or attitude you need and desire to improve tomorrow and in the future.

The Examen might take 15 to 20 minutes to complete but can also be done in a much more meditative, longer time, especially during retreats.

The Examen Simplified for Students

The Examen is a prayerful reflection on how God is present or active in one's life, and how one is responding to that presence of God and God's persistent call to holiness. The practice of a daily examination of conscience is from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, which quickly became a key part of Jesuit life from the beginning of the Society of Jesus. The major intention and grace from the Examen is ongoing formation and growth. God who is the formator par excellence fashions our inner attitudes and instructs us "in the same way a teacher instructs a child". The Examen helps us to look at who we are, what we are, where we are, what we do, what we think, and how we relate with others in life, how we react to what happens in life, with the view to be better sons and daughters of God.

The Examen can be very difficult or dry if one rigidly focuses on the five steps of the Exercise. One has to personalize it and make it natural and part of one's life. That way, the graces of the five steps of the Examen are naturally received but without one necessarily focusing on them.

Here is one example of a personal and natural way of doing the Examen as a daily spiritual exercise for scholastics and other busy people:

The Examen needs to have a familiar and regular 'routine' to it. Don't be tempted to use new formats all the time.

The Examen is an opportunity to review how well I am doing as a disciple of Jesus.

So, after the very heated discussions of the class or meeting, when the mind is clouded with all sorts of ideas, when it is not so easy to recollect and become aware of God's presence...

Take a few deep breathes and as you walk around or sit in the chapel or under some cool tree shade, ask yourself a simple but leading question:

How generous or charitable or attentive or grateful have I been in my conversations and interactions with those I encountered today?

Gratitude: Through the Examen we become grateful for the good things that happen to us or that we do in life.

Review of the Day: We look at our thoughts, actions, words, attitudes, habits, and relations; one by one; and appreciate the failures and successes/good.

Seek forgiveness: When we reflect on our failures, shortcomings, bad thoughts/decisions/actions etc we naturally have a sense of regret or remorse.

Resolution: The sense of gratitude for the good that we do, or remorse/regret for the bad we do spiritually leads us to resolve to do or be better in future.

