

The Daily Examen *A Reflective Prayer by Ignatius of Loyola*

Around 500 years ago, St. Ignatius of Loyola developed a prayer practice called the Daily Examen. It is a model of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to become aware of God's presence and to discern God's direction for one's life. The following is an adaptation of the Daily Examen. It takes approximately fifteen to twenty minutes.

1. Become aware of God's presence.

Settle into a time of quietness. Let go of immediate distractions. Take some deep breaths, inviting the Holy Spirit into this holy time and space. Now, slowly review the events of your day with the help of the Holy Spirit. As you parse specific details, ask God to bring you clarity and understanding, especially with regard to the various emotions you felt during the day.

2. Review the day with gratitude.

Now, review your day again, paying attention to the joyful surprises and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you encountered. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to the small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details. Thank God for these experiences.

3. Review the day with a penitent spirit.

As you review your day a third time, let God show you places where you fell short. Where did you strike out in anger or in judgement? Where were you greedy or unkind? Where did you fail to live up to your potential? Look deeply at the implications of such sins. How did you intentionally or unintentionally hurt others? Yourself? God? Make note of these moments, and ask for God's forgiveness.

4. Choose a particular part 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. Is God inviting you to do something? Or celebrate something? Or let something go?

5. Look forward to tomorrow.

Ask God to shine light on the next day. What are your priorities and goals? What are God's? Does anything need to shift? 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 God for help and understanding. Pray for hope and strength. End the Examen with the Lord's Prayer.