

The Daily Examen

St. Ignatius Loyola practiced and taught a prayer exercise known as “the Examen,” which comes from the Latin word for examination. There are many versions of the Examen today, but all use five steps.

1. Settle In.

Ask for the Spirit to be present. Begin with a bit of silence as you calm down.

2. Give Thanks.

What are you grateful for today?

3. Review the Day.

Carefully look back over the day. Simply recall and notice the specific moments and the feelings, sights, and sounds you experienced.

4. Get Real.

In reviewing the day, where were there moments of sacredness? When were you drawing closer to God or further away?

5. Look Towards Tomorrow.

Anticipate what tomorrow may hold. How can you approach tomorrow seeing it through the lens of God’s love and hope?

About the Examen

As it is explained, the heart of the Examen is the third step of reviewing your day. "Think of it as a movie playing in your head," writes James Martin, S.J., in *The Jesu- it Guide to (Almost) Everything*. "Push the play button and run through your day, from start to finish, from your rising in the morning to preparing to go to bed at night. Notice what made you happy, what made you stressed, what confused you, what helped you be more loving. Recall everything: sights, sounds, feelings, tastes, textures, conversations, thoughts, words, and deeds. Each moment offers a window to where God has been in your day."

And remember that no experience is too trivial for spiritual investigation.

"Nothing in our lives is so insignificant that it doesn't deserve God's attention," notes Jim Manney in *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer*, "In fact, the mundane and the humdrum parts of our lives give depth and texture to our relationships with God. Washing the windows and cooking dinner are as much a part of the relationship as graduation day. If it's part of our human experience, God is in it."

Ignatius was emphatic about the Examen. He told the early Jesuits that if they for some reason did no other spiritual exercises, they should do this one. Then as now, the Examen is a spiritual tool for sizing up your days – and planting the seeds for a more purposeful life.