

Daily Examen

"The *examen* is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It's actually an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 to 20 minutes per day. Here it is in a nutshell:

1. Ask God for light.

I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.

2. Give thanks.

The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

3. Review the day.

I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.

4. Face your shortcomings.

I face up to what is wrong - in my life and in me.

5. Look toward the day to come.

I ask where I need God in the day to come.

Simple? Yes. Easy? Not really. Sometimes praying the examen is smooth and joyful; sometimes it's arduous. If the examen prayer is doing its job, it will bring up painful moments and cause you to look at behavior that's embarrassing. Sometimes you squirm praying the examen, but why would you have it otherwise? Real prayer is about change, and change is never easy.

But there's nothing complicated or mysterious about making the examen part of your life. The subject matter of the examen *is* your life - specifically the day you have just lived through. The examen looks for signs of God's presence in the events of the day: lunch with a friend, a walk in the park, a kind word from a colleague, a challenge met, a duty discharged. The examen likes the humdrum. God is present in transcendent "spiritual" moments, but he's also there when you cook dinner, write a memo, answer email, and run errands. The examen looks at your conscious experience. The ebb and flow of your moods and feelings are full of spiritual meaning. Nothing is so trivial that it's meaningless. What do you think about while sitting in traffic or waiting in a long line at the grocery store? What's your frame of mind while doing boring and repetitive chores? You'll be surprised at how significant such moments can be when you really look at them."

- Jim Manney, *A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer: Discovering the Power of St. Ignatius of Loyola's Examen*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011.