

The Daily Examen

The Ignatian Examen

The Ignatian Examen, or the Daily Examen is a contemplative prayer led by memory. Rather than a prayer utilized to clear one's conscience, the Examen is a prayer of consciousness. During an Examen, one reflects on the current day, focusing on memories from the events of the day as a way of recognizing the presence of God.

Often, the Examen awakens us the presence of God through routine or ordinary moments to illustrate the subtle and surprising ways that God is with us. This prayer practice helps cultivate an awareness of God's presence, and helps us receive Jesus Christ as the one who forgives, heals, blesses, and gives us the Father in love.

This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.

- 1 Acknowledge the presence of God (Jer. 23:23–24; Psalm 139).
- 2 Thank God - Father, Son, & Holy Spirit - for who He is.
- 3 Recognize one "Consolation" from the day. Receive it as a gift.
- 4 Recognize one "Desolation" from the day. Pray into it. Invite Jesus to meet you there.
- 5 Envision the remainder of your day with the knowledge that Jesus goes with you by his Spirit.

A consolation is an experience that causes you to feel fully alive, at peace, joyful, happy, comforted, whole, connected, your best self, etc. This could be anything from your breakfast to an encounter with a loved one, the warmth of sunshine to the smell of sunscreen.

A desolation is an experience that causes you to feel drained of energy, anxious, frustrated, irritated, angry, sad, alone, isolated, unaccepted, fragmented, shameful, guilty, fearful, less than your best self, etc. and could be understood as an experience in which you feel far away from God.

Even though a desolation is an uncomfortable and sometimes distressing experience and we may feel as if God is far away, God is still very near. So the gift is praying with the desolation, telling God about your experience and asking for God's grace in the experience. (It is also good to give God thanks for the consolation experiences.) God shows up in desolations AND consolations. It's just that it's easier to "experience" God in consolations and we often move away from God in desolations.

John Calvin famously wrote that, "in Christ, God is nearer to me than I am to myself." It is with this confidence that we enter into contemplative prayer. Trusting that Jesus reconciles us to ourselves, and asking for his power and presence to do that work of reconciliation by his Spirit. Trusting that, with practice, we might learn to live like the truest thing (that my life is hidden with Christ in God) about us is actually true.