



## Discovering Ignatian Spirituality

### The Examen

Our lives are the story of God and us in a constant and changing relationship. This story unfolds in all the complicated and ordinary events of our lives.

St Ignatius considered this the most important prayer of the day. Through reflection on God's personal invitation to me, I can deepen my attention to God's action within and around me. I begin to recognize a pattern of call and response which deepens my true identity as a companion of Jesus.

This Review of the Day invites us to see the 'God moments' in our day, to notice those times of joy, gift, love, etc, and relish them. Ignatius has a lovely phrase in his Spiritual Exercises that "it is not much knowledge but the inner feeling and relish of things that fills and satisfies the soul" [Ex 2]. We want to get a 'feel' for the things of God, as Ignatius did in his daydreaming, and relish where we notice God. And in that loving relationship, we can also bring to God the times that were less good, 'the mud and the muck' as Mark E Thibodeaux SJ puts it in his book Reimagining the Examen. We notice our resistance, our regrets: the feelings, thoughts, actions that lead us away from God.

The examen begins with gratitude to God, which can sometimes be a challenge, but helps us to recognise the gifts we have been given,

Many versions of the examen have been written over the centuries. They are guidelines not instruction books. The examen is often prayed at the end of the day or in the morning to review the previous day. It is important to find a time that will be best for you and it may take a while to find your own rhythm. Pray as you can, not as you can't.

Once we have prepared ourselves and reminded ourselves we are in the presence of God who loves us deeply, the examen has five sections:

1. Asking to see the day through God's eyes rather than our own
2. Gratitude – recognising what am I most grateful for
3. Where was the consolation, the movement towards God
4. Knowing ourselves loved as we are, what was I least grateful for, where was the desolation
5. Asking God's help for the future

## Review of the Day

- We ask for the light of the Holy Spirit to help us see the past day as God saw it, asking to be shown where God was with us.
- We give thanks for the gift of each day, for the love of God which has carried us throughout it.
- We review our day: what happened? Who did we meet? How did people and events touch us? How did we feel? Did we notice God's presence in any of this?
- When did I feel joy, hope or love. When did I feel free? One moment which you would like to relive...? Relive it now with God, in thanksgiving.
- Anything for which you are least grateful? When you failed to give or receive love? Offer it to God for healing and forgiveness.
- Look to tomorrow, a new day of God's favours and kindnesses: call to mind what you expect lies ahead, ask God to bless the people and events of tomorrow, know that you go into tomorrow in God's love and care.

## Scripture Passages for further reflection

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|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lamentations 3:22-24 | <i>The favours of the Lord are not all passed...every day they are renewed</i> |
| Psalms 41 (42): 9    | <i>By day the Lord will send his loving kindness</i>                           |
| 1 Kings 19: 11-13    | <i>Encountering God in the still small voice</i>                               |
| John 20: 11-16       | <i>'Woman, why are you weeping?'</i>                                           |
| 1 Samuel 3:2-10      | <i>Speak, Lord, your servant is listening</i>                                  |
| Psalms 62(63): 6-8   | <i>On my bed I think of you</i>                                                |