

Daily *Examen* Guide

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful self-reflection in order to detect God's presence and discern God's grace-filled direction. It is an ancient practice that can illuminate God's hand at work in the entirety of our experience.

The method presented here is adapted from a technique described by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. One of the few rules of prayer that St. Ignatius made for the Jesuit order he founded (1534) was the requirement that Jesuits practice the Examen twice daily—at noon and at the end of the day. It's a habit that Jesuits, and many other Christians, practice to this day.

EXAMEN IN A NUTSHELL

Find a quiet place. Place feet flat on the floor.

PRAY

1. **LIGHT**

Ask God for holy eyes to see something of value in each moment, each memory.

2. **THANKS**

Replay the last 24 hours in your mind. Give thanks for the day you've just lived as a gift from God. What can you give thanks for? What seeds did you plant? What did you learn?

3. **FEELINGS**

Pay attention to feelings that surface as you recall the day: anxiety, anticipation, fear, hope, love, boredom, failure, joy

4. **FOCUS**

Choose a feeling and pray from it.

5. **FUTURE:**

Consider the day to come. Ask God for guidance, betterment, fresh energy.

CLOSE WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Excerpt from “Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day” by Dennis Hamm, SJ (<http://bit.ly/2iatDjY>)

Pray for light.

Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. The goal is not simply memory but graced understanding. That’s a gift from God... “Lord, help me understand this blooming, buzzing confusion.”

Review the day in thanksgiving.

Everybody likes beautiful gifts, and that is precisely what the past 24 hours contain—gifts of existence, work, relationships, food, challenges. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God. So use whatever cues help you to walk through the day from the moment of awakening—even the dreams you recall upon awakening. Walk through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, task to task, person to person, thanking God for every gift you encounter.

Review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day.

Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface, the whole range: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion, disgust, gratitude, pride, rage, doubt, confidence, admiration, shyness—whatever was there. Some of us may be hesitant to focus on feelings in this over-psychologized age, but I believe that these feelings are the liveliest index to what is happening in our lives. This leads us to the fourth moment:

Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.

That is, choose the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important was going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling—praise, petition, contrition, cry for help or healing, whatever.

Look toward tomorrow.

Using your appointment calendar if that helps, face your immediate future. What feelings surface as you look at the tasks, meetings, and appointments that face you? Fear? Delighted anticipation? Self-doubt? Temptation to procrastinate? Zestful planning? Regret? Weakness? Whatever it is, turn it into prayer—for help, for healing, whatever comes spontaneously. To round off the examen, say the Lord’s Prayer.