

Daily Examen – How to Pray

Part of the purpose of prayer is to help us recognize God's presence in your life. Prayer trains us to look, and enables us to see. 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged a mindfulness in prayer which has been called the "Daily Examen". The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Here is one version of St. Ignatius's prayer. Use of a journal is recommended to capture reflections, questions, insights, answers, etc.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Begin by looking back on the events of the day. Invite Jesus to walk with you as you mentally relive conversations, encounters, challenges, etc. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. As you walk through your day in the presence of Christ, note its joys and delights. Focus first on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from others? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, the seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is the Spirit of truth revealing to you through these feelings?

You see some ways that you fell short – however you may define "short". Make note of any failings, sins, and faults. But look deeply for the implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Or perhaps an area of behavior/thinking that you need to consciously change? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her or him in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Open your heart to whatever the Spirit would have you see, learn, or do as a result.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. As for help and understanding. Pray with hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with. "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

See more at:

1. <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/#sthash.F6UjX2Ve.dpuf>
2. <http://www.loyola.org/examen.html>

-adapted by Rev. Jim Wishmyer, August 21, 2020.