



Pick Up: EVENING EXAMEN

In the business world there is a famous saying, “Nothing improves if it’s not measured!” This may be true concerning budgets and inventory, but it is far more true of your spiritual progress. Throughout the history of the Church, across a wide range of personalities and spiritualities, one practice was always recommended to aid in spiritual growth: the examen.

Every evening before you go to bed, do an examination of your day and ask yourself honest questions. But it isn’t just an inventory of good and bad actions, it’s your own personal reflection on how God has moved in your life. So often, because of the rush and the task- oriented nature of our lives, we miss the moments of grace breaking in. By spending 10 minutes contemplating the events of your day, and how you reacted to them, you begin to see the movement and presence of God.

You will also notice patterns of acting and reacting and habits that maybe you never knew you had. You will see what leads to towards, or away, from God. This type of self-knowledge is immensely helpful because you realize what you need to confess, what you need to pray for, and what specific steps tomorrow you will do to change your life. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, is famous for it in his spiritual exercises. By tapping into this practice (even after Lent!) consistently, you will notice profound spiritual change in your life. Here are the five steps for an Ignatian Examen.

How to Pray the Examen as a Spiritual Discipline:

Carve out about 10-15 minutes of time for the examen. Try your best to be uninterrupted.

- Be thankful for the events and interactions of the day. Gratitude cultivates kills our feelings of entitlement, and before God no one is entitled but Him!
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and illuminate the day’s events and interactions.
- Go through the major parts of your day and look for God’s presence or his absence, and whether these movements are leading you to God or away from Him.
- Respond to these movements by clinging to the good and rejecting the bad. Ask yourself why you were led towards/away from God. Ask for forgiveness for your sins. Praise God for the good you did.
- Resolve that tomorrow will be a better day because of this or that specific and concrete action you’ll do to really change for the better. Anticipate what is coming the next day and how you’ll respond through God’s grace in order to deal with it.