



Our days often rush past us in a blur of activities, interactions, problem solving, deadlines, posts, appointments and expectations. Finding deep meaning and richness in our lives can be a frustrating and elusive endeavor. In our activity, we can easily not see or hear what is actually happening both in and around us, unable to sense the presence and purpose of God.

The Examen of Consciousness is a simple way of looking with God at our day in the rear-view mirror. It was devised by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) to discern more clearly how God is present and active in our lives. The Examen's simplicity and brevity (10-20 minutes daily) make it relatively easy to incorporate into a busy schedule. Over time, the Examen can help us to identify patterns in our lives that pull us away from God or draw us into intimacy with God. With this increasing awareness, we can more purposefully make life-giving choices that nourish our friendship with the Mystery we call God.

Here are three examples of ways to practice the Examen to get you started:

1. Examen of Consciousness. based on Ben Campbell Johnson, *Invitation to Prayer*. (Decatur, CTS Press 1992, pp. 18-22.)

GATHER THE DAY. Identify and list up to ten major events of your daily: like for example, prayer, particular conversations, meetings, meals, work, play. You can list them mentally or on paper.

REVIEW THE DAY. Reflect upon each occurrence that you list, without judging yourself, making excuses or avoiding feelings. Thank God for each part of your day, for your life, and for God's presence in the midst of it.

CONFESS YOUR SIN. Acknowledge your faults in thought, word, and deed toward God, your neighbor, and yourself, you can add creation too.

SEEK THE MEANING OF THE EVENTS. Reflect on the larger significance of these events asking questions such as: What might God be saying? What might I be called to do? How is this connected to the rest of my life? Write down what comes to mind. You might journal these reflections, potentially discovering patterns or consistent messages in your life.

2. Examen of Consciousness. Adapted by Father Timothy Gallagher, Sheila Fabricant, Dennis & Matt Linn, and Campus Ministry of Canisius College.

IMAGINE God is looking upon you, now, with great affection.

NOTICE the specific moment of this day for which you are most grateful. Share your gratitude with God.

ASK God, as you understand God, to help you review your day. Look over the main events of your day, noting any stirrings in your heart or thoughts that were meaningful, or gave you life, and give thanks.

ANTICIPATE the following day and plan concretely how to live it in union with God's loving desires that are within you. By week's end, notice the balancing act that is occurring between relationships, work, play, prayer, and action.

3. Examen of Consciousness. Use the following paraphrases of the essential Examen question to guide your prayer practice and discerning reflection.

For what moment recently am I most grateful?

For what moment recently am I least grateful?

When did I give and receive the most love recently?

When did I give and receive the least love recently?

When did I recently feel most alive?

When did I feel life draining out of me?

When, recently did I have the greatest sense of belong to myself, others, God and the universe?

When did I have the least sense of belonging?

When was I happiest recently?

When was I saddest?

What was the past week's high point?

What was the past week's low point?

Resources that you may find meaningful if you wish to practice the Examen and want more direction.

Online:

www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen

www.marquette.edu/faith/examen-of-consciousness.php

Books:

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. 1533

Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray from Your Day. Mark E. Thibodeaux, 2015.

Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life. Dennis & Sheila Linn, Matthew Linn. 1995.