

## **Intro How to pray the Ignatian Examen step-by-step**

You can make the basic Examen in 10-15 minutes. Some people do it twice a day, many just once in the evening at the end of the day. The basic format has five steps but is very flexible. The Advent Examen offers one variation, but there are many others. The key thing is to find a way of doing it so that you become more aware of the Lord's presence in your life.

### **1. Become present to myself in God's presence now.**

I become present to myself in God, and I thank God for the gifts God is giving me. I start the Examen by becoming present to myself in God rather than trying to be present to God. Interruptions, noise, and cultural pressures constantly drag me away from myself. So, I must become present to myself as an individual whom almighty God has chosen as His own. I must become aware that I belong to God now. And that means becoming aware of the gifts God has given me. I don't start examining myself without being aware of the gifts God is giving me--not in general, not in the past, but right now, today.

### **2. Ask to see what comes from God and what does not**

On the basis of the gratitude for God's gifts that I prayed over in the first step, I ask God that I can see in myself--in what I have said, what I have done, what I have thought, what I feel and value--what really comes from God's desiring and the way God has structured the world and myself, and what comes merely from my life world. I might not be sure I want to see in detail how much secularism has crept into my thinking. My culture gives me values and perceptions that are simply not Christ's. I ask God to let me see what I am thinking, doing, being--anything that is not what God wants.

### **3. Look at what happened today**

What has been unfolding in my life? What are the things that challenge me and make me think? Where was God today? How did I respond to his presence? Some people review the day hour by hour; others just focus on the highlights. There is always something going on in my life as I grow and change. Often it is a very holy, sometimes not. Often enough, within seconds something pops into mind that I did or omitted to do that I regret.

### **4. Ask forgiveness for your failures**

All along I am thinking that God was with me in all the things I did today. So, if I did something sinful, said something hurtful or chose something selfish, I acted as though God was not with me. Ignatius urges me to confess to the Lord, "I did this, and it was wrong." I realize that I am with someone who loves me dearly and I regret my failures.

### **5. Look toward tomorrow**

The last point is very optimistic, yet challenging: why it is so hard for me to be authentic? To act consistently like who I am and who I want to be? Whenever I get into a situation that does not fit with what Jesus teaches me, I will look for something holy to do in place of the unholy stuff that compromises me. I look for those desires within myself that come most directly from God's passionate creative love in me. "What does God hope in me?" That is what I want.