

The Examen Prayer

Taken from *The Examen Prayer* - Timothy Gallagher

Introduction to the Examen

- growth in relationship with God occurs through mutual self-revelation
- the *examen* is a way of praying that opens our eyes to God's daily self-revelation and increasingly clarifies our own responses to it.
- the *examen* is truly prayer, something we ask God to do, and not human achievement
- the *examen* is our way of being regularly available to God so that divine light and love can heal our darkness and point the way toward spiritual growth.
- NOTHING in the spiritual life can replace prayer that seeks this awareness of God's daily leading in our lives.
- St. Ignatius calls the *examen* "**the key spiritual exercise**"
- the *examen* is NOT the self-evaluation of a heart in isolation but rather a colloquy, a conversation, a dialogue between two hearts.

Transition

- **Begin the Examen by becoming aware of the love with which God looks upon you.**
- *See John 1:48, Mark 2:14, Luke 7:13, Mark 10:21*

Step 1 **Gratitude**

- "to give thanks to God our Lord for the benefits received"
- by starting with gratitude, we open the window into the deepest reality of our spiritual lives: God's unbounded love for us and desire for our response, in love, to the love revealed in this giving.
- *go through the day hour by hour or spontaneously*
- let the Lord tell the concrete story of his love in the hours of this day

Step 2 **Petition**

Matt 7:7
John 14:13

- step one teaches us that all we do and have comes from God
- petition is asking for the grace that alone can make our examen fruitful, recognizing that even the rest of this prayer of the examen is a gift from God
- *humbly and sincerely ask for the outpouring of God's grace and love that enables us to do all things and so empowers us to practice the examen.*

Step 3 **Review**

- we review our spiritual experience of the day (spiritual desolation and consolation, affections, thoughts, feelings), ask God to shine light on our experience so that we may remember it well
- *when experiencing desolation (heaviness), what was the cause of it?*
- *when experiencing consolation (energizing joy), what is the Lord desiring me to do with it?*
- this step contains enormous potential for growth in our capacity to notice, understand, and respond fruitfully to the spiritual movements of our hearts and so to increase in Gospel love.
- watch for possible invitations from the Lord to moral growth

Step 4 **Forgiveness**

Luke 15:20

- "to ask forgiveness of God our Lord for my failings"
- should flow naturally from our review done in step 3
- this is the privileged daily space of the deep experience of knowing that we are loved and held by God in all our brokenness and littleness.
- in this step we reflect upon the times of our faults, the times in which we did not receive God's spiritual visitation.
- our asking is simply the gateway for God to respond with his loving embrace and celebration.

Step 5 **Renewal**

- "to propose amendment with God's grace"
- first four steps have looked back from the perspective of the present. This step looks ahead
- as you look ahead to the next day, you normally have a good idea of what to expect.
- in this step look ahead to foresee and plan specifically how we will respond to God's call to growth.
- *Which spiritual initiatives will lead most surely to growth?*
- *What specifically shall we undertake as we prepare for the coming day?*
- *Will we be able to live concretely the newness that we seek?*
- this step will often - though not always - be concerned with seemingly small initiatives. small enough that they would be unnoticed by others.