Prayer of Examen

The Prayer of Examen is a daily spiritual exercise developed by St. Ignatius Loyola. This practice seeks to grow followers of Jesus in their capacity to discern God's will, find God in all things, and enhance their understanding of God's good creation. The prayer may take between ten and twenty minutes. The majority of that time will be spent reviewing your day. Try not to dwell too long on thoughts. Instead, allow yourself to become aware and move on.

Begin by finding a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.

Then sit comfortably, with good posture and both feet on the floor. Allow yourself to relax and close your eyes if you like.

1. Recall you are in the presence of God

As you sit in silence, focus on God's deep and abiding love for you. We are always in the presence of God. Try to become aware of God's presence in an attentive way. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall your day with love.

2. Recall your day with gratitude

After a few moments, remember the small pleasures of your day; things like a good night's sleep, a good conversation, or a beautiful sunset. These are all gifts from God. As you remember these small gifts from God, take a moment to reflect on the gifts that you gave today, whether to God or to others. How did you bring your strengths, your sense of humor, your abilities, your encouragement, your patience to others today? When you have finished, pause briefly and thank God for these things.

3. Ask for guidance from God.

In a moment you will begin to retrace the steps of your day. Before you do, ask God to guide and direct your mind. The Spirit will lead and guide you into the truth and mystery of your heart. Ask God for the capacity to recall your day with clarity and an understanding of your limitations.

4. Review your day

This is the central and longest step of the prayer. Go back to the start of your day and allow it to play like a short movie in your mind. Pay attention to the details. What were your feelings? What motivated you to respond to certain situations in the way that you did? The purpose of this is to draw out the positive and the negative aspects of your day.

As you are reviewing your day, ask the question, "Where did I fail today?" Was there a moment when you lived out of anger or bitterness? Were there things that you avoided? Don't allow yourself to dwell on these things or seek to resolve them. Simply allow yourself to identify them and move on. Next, ask the question, "When did I love?" Was there a moment, or several moments, in which you made the choice to live out of love. Perhaps it was a kind act like holding the door or spending intentional time with your family. Remember the ways that you chose to love this day. Next, search for any patterns or habits during the course of the day. Do you make coffee at the same time? Do you chat for a few minutes with a co-worker? Are you always staying late at work? As you detect these patterns, what emotions do you sense coming to the surface for each habit? Do these habits help you face your day with love? Do they hinder you from facing your day with love?

5. Reconcile and Resolve

Finally, picture yourself talking with God as you would with a friend. Maybe there was something in your day that you don't feel good about. Tell God about this and express your disappointment and ask him to be with you when you face that moment again. Allow yourself to feel the sorrow in your heart as you share this, but also remember and give thanks for God's continual restoration of your heart. Remember all of the good moments of your day and thank God for His presence with you in those moments.

6. End with the Lord's Prayer

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Amen