

# The Ignatian Prayer of Examen

by Rev. Mark Muckler

## Introduction

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish Catholic priest and theologian, who, with six companions, founded the religious order of the Society of Jesus, and became its first Superior General, in Paris in 1541. And he created a prayer practice called “The Examen”, or the “Ignatian Examen”. The Examen is a short prayer of internal reflection often prayed at the end of the day or just before bedtime. In the examen, we pray in 5 movements as the Holy Spirit leads us.

First, we **Relish** in the love of God, giving thanks to God for our many blessings. Second, we **Request** that the Holy Spirit would illumine us, holding us up to the light of Christ revealing to us any impurities. In the third movement, we **Review** the day as a “prayer of self-examine”, looking within, reflecting back upon our day discovering the work of God in us and in others. We also review at any moments where we may have struggled and fallen into sin, where we have been hurt ourselves or where we may have hurt someone else. We then confess and **Repent** of our sins before God asking for forgiveness, healing, and grace from God. And with thanksgiving, we **Resolve** to live more fully into who God would have us to be the next day.

## Prepare

As you prepare to pray, find a quiet place where you can disconnect from any distractions. Settle your mind and give God your undivided attention. Be encouraged to keep each movement of this prayer as a sacred and holy conversation with God, talking and listening to what God might have to say to you.



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## I – RELISH: Celebrate & Give God Thanks

Begin your prayer by relishing in the presence of God. Give God thanks for His Divine care and love for you. Offer a brief prayer of admiration of how God has blessed you in the big things and in the small things. And give God thanks for the moments that went well and for all the gifts of the day.

## II – REQUEST: Prayer for Illumination

Ask God to bring to light every area of your life. Pray asking God that the Holy Spirit lead you through an honest, and at times, difficult soul-searching. Pray that God would reveal to you the areas in your life where you have fallen short of His glory. Request that the Holy Spirit would lead you through an honest review of your day. For example:

*23 Search me, God, and know my heart;*

*test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*24 See if there is any offensive way in me,*

*and lead me in the way everlasting. - Psalm 139:23-24*

*“Lord, reveal Yourself to me, speak to me, show me the way, lead me, guide me, illumine me, be glorified in and through me.”*

Listen for God’s voice.

*Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, 1 Corinthians 13:12*



### III – REVIEW: Examine the Day

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Reflect Upon the Day. How did God work in you today? Ask God to reveal to you any specific things that you’ve done or left undone, things you’ve said or left unsaid. Reflect upon your failures, struggles, and mistakes. Did you live according to the Spirit today? Or according to the flesh? If Jesus were to have walked beside you all day, what would He have seen? What might He say about your day together? Pay attention to your emotions.

**Listen for God’s voice. What do you sense God saying to you?**

*Scripture: James 1:22-25, Luke 6:41-42, John 1:8, Colossians 3:1-11*

After you’ve had a few moments to review your day, don’t get stuck here though. Move on towards the next movement of the Holy Spirit. Confession and Repentance. Praise be to God we are offered grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. This is very important to realize. I’ve heard someone say that it’s like “*turning stumbling blocks into stepping-stones*”. So we move on in grace.

*Scripture: Romans 3:23-24*

### IV – REPENT: Confess

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As you continue to pray, face your shortcomings in the light of Christ. As you confess your sins before God, ask for forgiveness. And ask for healing for both you and those that you may have offended. Repent of any mistakes and failures, turning from sin and turning towards Christ. And ask for guidance and direction to steer clear of the ways that you may be tempted in the ways you were today.

*Scripture: Psalm 51:1-4, John 10:10, 1 John 1:9, Psalm 32:1-5*



