

EXAMEN - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

The “Examen” is one of the main forms of prayer for Ignatius. It helps us to find God in the events of daily life. Short examens can establish a rhythm in my life as the liturgical hours establish a rhythm in the life of the monks. Ignatius said that students have no time for long prayers, but that the examen should never be omitted. He thought that if it were announced that the Society of Jesus was suppressed, it would not take him more than a quarter of an hour, the time for an examen, to find renewed peace. Examen is not about bad and good. It is about what is giving life and what is hindering life.

MAIN IDEAS

There are various ways to use the Examen. We are summarizing a few below and invite you to read more about it in the resources section and the handout.

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| <p>General Examen <i>Looking at one’s life</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relax and breath deeply 2. Ask for light to discover God’s presence in my live and/or connect with the intuitions and fundamental values of my life 3. Give thanks 4. Seeing the “story” of the time I want to contemplate: faces, situations, tensions, 5. What do I discover? How is it affecting me? Should I change the way I relate myself? 6. Finish with a short prayer (Our Father, Hail Mary, ...) and/or a moment of silence and/or 7. Reading a short text that has a deep meaning to me | <p>Particular Examen <i>Following something in which I desire to grow</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a limit (normally small in my life). Listening more, devoting some time for reflection, for prayer, preparing better a meeting... Sometimes those who surround us remind these limits to us: family, colleagues, etc. 2. Be attentive during the day (not obsessively) and take down some notes |
| <p>Prayer Examen <i>Detecting “motions” in my prayer or in some practice of interiority</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After a time of prayer and/or silence: “see how it went”... motions, feelings, calls, 2. In relation to the material and specifics: What helps me? Places, times, ...? Materials? | <p>Examen of Consciousness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discovering those dimensions of my life that prevent me from growing towards God, as a person and towards others (selfishness, sins, “disordered affections”, ...) 2. Asking forgiveness to the Lord and the rest. Searching for inter and external reconciliation. |

In the handout section you will find the following particular reflections and approaches to the practice of the Examen:

- A reflection on the Examen by Michel Bacq S.J
- Beginning to dig for the treasure - Extract from God of Surprises. (pp.77-79) by Gerald W. Hughes
- The Examen of Apostolic Consciousness for Reflective Leaders with red seal
- The Ignatian examen of Consciousness
- The Awareness Examen by Gerald Coleman, S.J

Helpful Questions for the Examen

If you want more concrete questions for your daily Examen, we suggest the following list:

- What is important for you to hold on to from the day?
- What might you want to “practice?”
- What intention do you want to bring to the rest of the evening?
- What do you want to hold onto as a learning or insight from the day?
- Is there an intention you want to carry forward in your leadership?
- Where is God moving in and for you this afternoon?
- Have I looked for all the appropriate means to put a good interpretation on what somebody told me? Am I able to repeat what he said? Did I detect what his/her unfulfilled needs, desires, or yearnings were beyond the awkward or offensive wording he used?
- When I'm disappointed with myself, do I beat myself up because I'm so bad? Or do I ask the Holy Spirit to help me to discover a better strategy in order to fulfill my deep desire, yearning or need?
- When somebody ask me for advice concerning his/her future, do I ask, “What brings you life?”
- What were the significant interior movements (that is, feelings, reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts, or insights)?
- What was the prevailing mood of my prayer: peace, agitation, excitement, boredom, confusion, calm?
- Was my prayer more about the head or the heart, or about both?
- What word, phrase, image, or memory meant most to me during prayer?
- Is there some unfinished business that I think God is calling me to return to during another time of prayer?
- Is there something happening in my life that is becoming part of my prayer? Do I feel moved to do something concrete in my life?
- Am I making the necessary preparations for my prayer? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that is getting in the way of my listening to God?

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Getting in touch with Ignatius' main way of prayer and the key elements of it
2. Introducing various ways of practicing the Examen
3. Slowly encountering God in our daily lives

“Each morning we should look at what we intend for that day, then make examen of conscience twice during the day.”

Saint Ignatius of Loyola