

The Examen

St. Ignatius believed that we can find God in all things, at every moment, even in the most ordinary times. Ignatius encourages us to look back over a period of time and pay attention to what is happening in and around us.

1. Pray for God's Help

Ask God to help you be grateful and honest as you look back on the day. With God's help, be attentive to how the Spirit was working in and through you, others, and creation. Let yourself see your day as God sees it.

2. Give Thanks

For Ignatius, gratitude is the first most important step on the spiritual journey. An attitude of gratitude, practiced often enough, helps us find God in all things and can transform the way we look at our life and at other people.

3. Pray over the Significant Feelings of the Day

Ignatius believed that God communicates with us not only through mental insight but also through our "interior movements" as he called them: our feelings, emotions, desires, attractions, repulsions and moods. As you reflect on the day, you may notice some strong feelings arise. Did they draw you closer to God? Or did they lead you away from God?

4. Rejoice and Seek Forgiveness

Rejoice in those times you were brought closer to God and ask forgiveness for those times today when you resisted God's presence in your life. Praise God for the grace of awareness given you during this time of prayer even if you became aware of things you are not proud of. This awareness is the beginning of healing and conversion.

5. Look to Tomorrow

Just as God is with you today, God will be with you tomorrow. Invite God to be part of your future. Ask God to give you the grace you need – for example, courage, confidence, wisdom, patience, determination or peace. Close by speaking to God from your heart or with a prayer that is familiar to you, such as the Our Father.

Adapted from *The Ignatian Adventure*, by Kevin O'Brien, SJ

Sleeping with Bread

During the bombing raids of WWII, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves once again homeless and without food. Nothing seemed to reassure them.

Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, *"Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow."*

This book is basically about asking ourselves two questions:

- For what am I most grateful?
- For what am I least grateful?

These questions can help us identify moments of consolation and desolation in our lives.

You can also phrase the question in any of the following ways:

- When did I give and receive the most love? The least love?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? Least sense of belonging?
- When was I most free? Least free?
- When was I most creative? Least creative?
- When did I feel most connected? Least connected?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

These simple question pairs, when regularly reflected upon, will draw out our inner motivations, values and true calling. The examen, used regularly, has the power to deepen our spiritual life.

-Adapted from *Sleeping with Bread*, Dennis Linn