

# GROUP RETREAT

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## PRAYER RESOURCE

*EXAMEN*

**ANEWLOOMI**  
ORG



## INTRODUCTION

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In this series of 'Prayer Resources', a theme is taken and explored so that diverse groups of people can engage with it by choosing the elements they need, are comfortable with or that fit their context.

Below is a range of material that you can choose from, you are encouraged to read through it all so you have a good understanding of the theme.

## WHAT IS THE EXAMEN?

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St. Ignatius of Loyola created the Examen to be a very short prayer that can be prayed at any time. In the Examen, we review our recent past to find God and his blessings in our daily life. Ignatius would say that the Examen should be the most important moment of our day because this moment affects every other moment.

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

St. Ignatius thought that the Examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible. One of the few rules of prayer that Ignatius made for the Jesuit order was the requirement that Jesuits practice the Examen twice daily - at noon and at the end of the day. It's a habit that Jesuits, and many other Christians, practice to this day.

## HOW DO I PRAY THE EXAMEN?

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There are five simple steps to the Examen:

- **Relish** the moments that went well and all of the gifts you have today.
- **Request** that the Spirit lead you through your review of the day.
- **Review** your day.
- **Repent** of any mistakes or failures.
- **Resolve**, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow well.

# EXAMPLE OF THE 5 STEP EXAMEN

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1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look toward tomorrow.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day and note its joys and delights. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

## END OF A RETREAT EXAMEN (30MINS)

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I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I feel myself soften and melt. I begin to turn down my thoughts and ask God to make his presence known. I sense God's presence around me and linger in it. I rest in this experience for a moment.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

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I ask God to reveal my thoughts from during the retreat. What were my strongest thoughts? What strong opinions did I hold? What attitudes did I carry with me? What presumptions or conclusions did I make? How did I perceive myself, my situation, and the people, places and events of this retreat?

1 MINUTE SILENCE

When I come upon a strong and influential thought, I sit with it for a moment. Did it come from a place of spiritual freedom or from a place of unfreedom? Did it lead me to greater or lesser spiritual freedom? Did it lead me to greater faith, hope and love?

1 MINUTE SILENCE

I give thanks for the thoughts that came from the true Spirit, and I ask forgiveness if I allowed unfreedoms within me to influence my thoughts.

1 MINUTE SILENCE

*repeat this process with 'words' and 'deeds' from the \**

## Group Retreat Prayer Resource

### EXAMEN

I now look to tomorrow. What thoughts (and words / deeds) do I desire to hold tomorrow about myself? About the people around me? About the situations I encounter? What do I desire to say tomorrow to specific people I'll probably encounter? What do I desire to do tomorrow? What deeds of love am I called to perform? I listen for God's voice.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

I make some concrete resolution based on what arose during this prayer time.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

Amen.

## BENEFITS

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The Examen brings our God's presence into the mud and muck of our day. It helps:

- unite you even closer to God;
- reveal God's perspective on your everyday life;
- stir you to praise God for the countless gifts that have popped up in your day, and to find God's presence in those gifts;
- give you an opportunity to recognize and apologize for your faults, and to grieve your failures and hurts and receive healing from them;
- bring insight into what is really going on beneath the surface of your thoughts, words, and actions—into the very source of your motivations;
- you discern how to handle the trickier aspects of your life, to know what gifts you need from God to do the right thing tomorrow, and to ask God for those gifts explicitly.

## END OF A MEETING EXAMEN (15 MINS)

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Place both your feet on the floor, close your eyes and place your open hands on your lap in a posture of attentiveness and openness to God's voice. We take a moment to quiet ourselves, to slow our breathing. Feel yourself soften, begin to turn down your thoughts.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

We ask God to be present and we focus on that presence around us and we linger in it.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

We spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings we have received today.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

We review all we have seen, heard and experienced during our meeting. What are you most grateful for? What has drawn you closer to God and inspired your ministry? Thank God for those things and tell God what they mean to you.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

Of all you have seen, heard and experienced during our meeting, what has been difficult? Is there something that you are attached to that you need to let go of? Is there something that really grates with your context, ministry or personal experience? We take this opportunity to speak to God about these things and to ask for guidance.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

We look back over this time of prayer. What has been most enlightening or moving (regardless of whether it was enjoyable or painful)? What was your prayer at that moment? We go back to that moment and linger there asking God if there is anything more we need to hear.

2 MINUTE SILENCE

Finally, we take the opportunity to ask "What, Lord, would you have me do tomorrow in regard of my learning from this meeting?"

2 MINUTE SILENCE

Amen.

## **WEBSITE RESOURCES**

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[www.ignatianspirituality.com](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com)

[www.reimaginingexamen.ignatianspirituality.com](http://www.reimaginingexamen.ignatianspirituality.com)

[www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org)