

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

“There are times when we have no trouble at all seeing God and his action in our lives – times of blessing, order, peace or joy. It is when life becomes chaotic, disordered or burdensomely troubled, when we are at our wit’s end that we cry out to God asking where he is. We may sometimes feel abandoned by God when we are in this state. It is at such times that it is most difficult to discern God’s presence and power in our lives. Yet assures us that God will never leave us or forsake us, that God loves us with such a fierce love that nothing can separate us from that love. . . The practice of the examen – a prayer of discernment at the end of each day, helps us to see the ways God has been present or absent from our daily lives. This prayer of attending to God’s presence, when practiced regularly, opens our eyes to new ways of recognizing God’s interruptions, God’s attempts to catch our attention, through our day. It is a prayer that sharpens our awareness and clears our vision so that we learn to discern where God is in our lives every day.”

Juliet Benner, Contemplative Vision

Here is an outline for the Examen:

Transition: I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin this examen.

Step One: Gratitude - I note the gifts that God’s love has given me over this day, and I give God thanks for them.

Step Two: Petition - I ask God for any insight and a strength that will make this examen a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity alone.

Step Three: Review – With my God, I review this day. I look for the stirrings in my heart and the thoughts that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both and, throughout the day in general. God is accompanying me on this journey of examen.

Step Four: Forgiveness – I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love and respect for me, removes heart’s burdens.

Step Five: Renewal – I look to the rest of the day, and with God, plan concretely how to live it in accord with God’s loving desire for my life.

Transition: Aware of God’s presence with me, I prayerfully conclude this examen.

Adapted from The Examen Prayer, Timothy M. Gallagher