

## An Outline of the Examen

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

*St. Ignatius:* I will pause “for the time I would take to pray an Our Father,” and “with my understanding raised on high,” consider “how God our Lord looks upon me” (*SpirEx*, 73)

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

I call to mind the large and small blessings received. I let the Lord tell me the concrete story of his love in the hours of this day.

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

Jesus promises: “Ask, and it will be given you” (Mt 7:7)

I ask for God’s help in this examen, for the love and wisdom of the Spirit, who “searches everything, even the depths of God” (1Cor 2:10).

Silently, I lift my heart to the Spirit:  
“Come....”

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

I look now at my day, “hour by hour, or from one period of time to another” (*SpirEx*, 43).

With the Lord, I look at how my day began: rising, preparing, times of prayer, conversations, a meal, beginning the day’s occupations.... What were the spaces of the heart? The thoughts? What was the Lord offering? How did I respond?

I look concretely at my activity, my work, my prayer, my service, as the day unfolded, “hour by hour.” Again, what was stirring in my heart? Spiritual consolation? Spiritual desolation? What can I recall of my thoughts? What was God showing me in these events? What decisions did I make, in response to this person whom God placed in my life this day, in handling this task, in my life of prayer this day?

How aware of God’s leading was I this day? How faithful to that leading was I? Where is God calling me to grow?

I review the experience of my day with the God whose unshakeable love I know....

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

Now, with trust, I ask for healing forgiveness of the God who, as Ignatius writes, “loves me more than I love myself.”

*Jean Vanier:* “We can only truly accept others as they are, and forgive them, when we discover that we are truly accepted by God as we are and forgiven by him. It is a deep experience, knowing that we are loved and held by God in all our brokenness and littleness.”

“He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him” (Lk 15:20): this is the God I encounter in step four of my examen prayer.

**Step Five: Renewal.** *I look to the next day and, with God, plan concretely how to live it in accord with God's loving desire for my life.*

In the light of all that I have seen looking over my day, I now look to tomorrow, and seek God's light on how he is calling me to grow spiritually in the specific circumstances of the day that awaits me.

**Transition:** I prayerfully conclude the examen with an Our Father or another prayer.