

The Examen in Five Steps

From *The Jesuit Guide to (almost) Everything* by James Martin SJ Harper One 2012 (my notes are in italics)

Before you begin, as in all prayer, remind yourself you are in God's presence, and ask God to help you with your prayer – *you may find it helpful to say the Lord's prayer or make the sign of the cross*

- 1. Gratitude: recall anything from the day for which you are especially grateful, and give thanks** – *need not be anything big, just reminding yourself of the small things that lift your spirits and make you smile can make a real difference. The psychologist Martin Seligman has a five blessings exercise which four hundred years after Ignatius, shows how important thankfulness is for our mental wellbeing. Remembering to be thankful for just five blessings each day lifts our mood and is as effective as a mild anti-depressant.*
- 2. Review: Recall the events of the day, from start to finish, noticing where you felt God's presence, and where you accepted or turned away from any invitations to grow in love** – *this is not saying we have lots of Damascus Road experiences every day, but rather to be open to the invitations God gives – perhaps to ring someone, to read something, to just pause and look at the sky – and reflect on whether you took Him up on the invitation or ignored it and did your own thing*
- 3. Sorrow: Recall any actions for which you are sorry**
- 4. Forgiveness: Ask for God's forgiveness. Decide whether you want to reconcile with anyone you have hurt** – *steps 3 and 4 sort of go together and the making up with someone is important or even being gentle on yourself if you haven't looked after yourself as best you could during the day*
- 5. Grace: Ask God for the grace you need for the next day and an ability to see God's presence more clearly** – *this step is really important; when you do the examen for a few days you notice patterns where you can keep tripping up. This is the chance to especially focus on asking for God's help with a particular daily challenge*

By doing this exercise regularly you are reminding yourself that you are still very much a disciple, a learner, curious about how God may be calling you each and every day and each and every moment and how you respond to this call. Making notes in a Journal can help.

*This quote from Jean-Pierre de Caussade SJ 1675-1751 *Abandonment to Divine Providence* really spoke to me even though the language may feel a little "dated". It is on p 284 in Martin's book*

Everything is Precious

Those who have abandoned themselves to God always lead mysterious lives and receive from God exceptional and miraculous gifts by means of the most ordinary, natural and chance experiences in which there appears to be nothing unusual. The simplest sermons, the most banal conversations, the least erudite books, become the source of knowledge and wisdom to those souls by virtue of God's purpose. This is why they carefully pick up the crumbs which clever minds tread under foot, for to them everything is precious and a source of enrichment.



For the Greater Glory of God