

SACRED RHYTHMS | prayer of examen

Materials: journal (optional)

Brief Description:

This way of praying comes from the 16th century as is attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola who developed spiritual exercises for himself and for his community, though he was also deeply influenced by French monks in the Benedictine monastery. Examen is a word that connotes examination; it is a focused prayer of reflection on our lives. It is an attentiveness to the Spirit of God.

Doing the Practice:

- Choose a segment of time to consider: the prior hours of this day, yesterday, or this past week. (The examen may be used to look back over any period of time.) In the instructions that follow we will consider this day.
- Quiet your mind in a time of prayer and know that God is with you.
- Look back at the day just as you might watch a movie, starting at the beginning of the day and letting the time roll by.
- First, notice the gifts hidden in your day. Give thanks.
- Notice the people with whom you came into contact, and the day's experiences, taking special note of your feelings, moods, and reactions along the way.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight and courage to look honestly, to guide you to what is important, to give you wisdom to understand what God wants to show you.
- Notice the times you felt most alive, but also those times when you felt life drain out of you. Where did you sense a closeness of God's presence and where might you have felt distance from God? Were there times during the day in which you experienced peace or lack of peace?
- Reflect on these things as long as you would like. You may or may not want to journal some of your thoughts or a prayer.
- End this time of prayerful reflection by looking forward to a tomorrow that will be filled with God, asking God to help you see him more clearly and follow him more nearly.
- Reflect on this experience for a few minutes and notice how you were able to enter into the presence of God by way of the practice. It may be helpful to record your reflections in a journal.