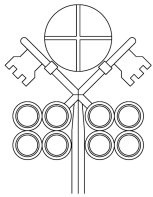
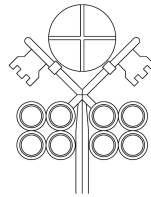


If you would like more personal assistance with this, or with any issues it has raised for you, we have a team of priests and prayer guides who would be pleased to talk with you. Simply leave a message at the Parish Office on 01902 422642.



Just 10 Minutes a day!



All of us need time to reflect on what's happening in our lives. Here's a summary of a technique used by St Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) called 'the examen'. It only need take 10 minutes a day to make a real difference to our lives!

The Examen is a prayer of reflection. It is a looking back. However, it is not just a looking back at what has gone wrong in the day or in life. It is more a general looking back at what we have experienced, of where we have been conscious of God at work in our day. St. Ignatius places emphasis on the importance of our experience. So in the Examen we **NOTICE** what we've experienced, thought and felt but **WITHOUT JUDGING** ourselves. It helps us to put ourselves in the presence of God from where we can look more closely at how

God has been moving and working in our lives. The focus of the prayer is God.

In the Examen we begin to discern that God may at times appear to be hidden or disguised, and we give ourselves the time and space to be in God's presence and discover God as he reveals himself to us in our daily lives.

It is a very flexible prayer which has been used for centuries. It is best used regularly as a part of our daily routine. For example, many people find it useful to set aside a quiet time of 10-20 minutes before going to bed at night, taking time to look back on the day that has just passed.

Recall you are in the presence of God

Each day is filled with a variety of events, emotions and thoughts. Some days are relaxed, others are productive, others hassled. Sometimes we have a day which is absolutely marvellous. Sometimes we have a day that is completely awful. No matter what kind of a day it has been...STOP!

Slow down and try to put yourself in God's presence. God is there with you – perhaps quiet, but always there. Acknowledge the presence of God.

God is not to be found in the earthquake, fire or storm, but God is in the whispering wind, in the quiet ticking of the clock, your quiet breathing, the gentle but strong beating of your heart.

Aware of God's presence, it is good to remember that God has been very good to you and to recall some of the many gifts you have been given. Perhaps there is something you immediately remember from this day where God's goodness to you and yours has been very present to you. Stay with that for a little realizing that these gifts of God are a sign of God's enormous love for you.

Ask for help from the Holy Spirit

Now ask God for the sensitivity of heart that when you are looking back over your day, you will be able to see God working there in all the things that have happened.

In your own words allow God to give you the light that will allow

Look at your day with gratitude

Pause and look quietly through the day. Start from when you first woke up in the morning. What has happened during the day? Remember that all you are doing is looking calmly at the day – you are an observer. Be neutral. Your purpose is not to judge either yourself or others.

There are many ways of looking back; some find it helpful to ask themselves questions. For example

- On the whole, was it a good or bad day?
- Was it a normal day or was it unusual in some way?
- Who did I meet during the day?
- Did I come across something surprising; a long lost friend or an awkward old enemy?
- Did I do or see something that comes back to mind? A story? A beautiful sunset? Something I was told? Something I saw on television? A song or a piece of music? A piece of work or an activity?

In all of these things that happened, what were your feelings? Were you happy or sad? Did you get angry, moody or frightened? Or perhaps you felt great – maybe it was a warm, comfortable, good or peaceful? Look at these feelings during the day: Did they change? Who or what caused them? Why?

God guides us through our moods and feelings. Normally the way of God is found in a deep sense of peace and consolation. If your day was disturbed or you were uneasy, can you sense where that uneasiness was coming from. Like a sailor who is buffeted by many different winds, we are affected by many different feelings. The better we come to know these, the easier it will become to discern the subtle movement of God in our lives. So, where was God in your day? Was He there but you failed to recognise him at the time? Perhaps you turned away? Maybe you saw God and greeted him on the road? Did you recognise him in that homeless person...that annoying child...that irritable classmate or teacher? What would Jesus have done in these circumstances?

Before you go on.....!

Another important question to ask is What can I be proud of today? Don't move on before you can say what it may be!

Reconcile and Resolve

When you have tried some of these things, ask yourself whether you have turned away from God during the day? Or turned a blind eye to God's movements in yourself or others?

God is a God of mercy. In your own words make a prayer asking forgiveness for anything that you may have done to ignore or hinder God during the day that has passed. Ask for the graces of healing and strength.

Looking Forward

The final part of the prayer is to look forward to tomorrow – what will happen when the new day dawns? Are there going to be times when it will be especially good to see the presence of God? Christians are a people of hope ... if we are at all anxious about what the new day may bring, let us pray for the sensitivity to see God's presence in the daily routine of our lives.

If we practice the Examen, we will gradually grow to know ourselves and our moods through life, and with the help of God we will see in our prayer the ways that God is moving in our day. As our hearts become more sensitive, we will recognise God more quickly as we go through the day; so that eventually we will be sensitive to the God who is not just in 'holy' things, but who is in ALL things.