

Prayers

From the

Reimagining the Examen

Application

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Reimagining the Ignatian Examen

Father Mark Thibodeaux

I ask God to fill me with his merciful love. I ask God to be the leader of this prayer time, rather than brooding or obsessing over myself or the day.

Going hour by hour, I review my day. In my imagination, I relive each significant moment of my day. I linger in the important moments and pass quickly over the less relevant ones.

I continue thanking God for the gifts I find in my day. I pause at any of the difficult moments of my day. I pay attention to any missed opportunities, when I could have acted in a certain way but didn't. When I find moments in which I was not the person I was called to be. I ask God's forgiveness. I try to sense his healing mercy wash over me.

I ask God to show me, concretely, how he wants me to respond or what he wants me to do tomorrow. I ask God to show me what kind of person he is calling me to be tomorrow. I resolve to be that person and ask God for his help.

I ask myself if there are any last words I wish to say to the Lord.

I close with the sign of the cross, the Glory Be, or the Our Father.

Was I Present or Absent? Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

God calls us to be fully present to the moment at hand, but so often we are lost in another world, lost in the past, lost in the future, lost in our brooding, lost even in our joys. Or perhaps we just get lost in the latest silly game on our smartphones while someone or some task needs our full attention.

Today's Examen invites you to explore the ways in which you were present and in which you were absent to the moments of your day.

I bow before my prayer spot and get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind begin to quiet down. I take a deep breath. I ask God to make his presence known around and in me. I feel this presence and soak in it.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking through my day, I ask the Lord to show me the moments when I was not fully present—when I became distracted and lost in my own thoughts while the moment called for my full attention. I ask God to show me the ill effects of my absence and to show me how much better things could have gone had I been fully present. I speak with God about those moments. I ask God for advice, healing, forgiveness.

As I look through the day, I also recognize the grace-filled moments when I was fully present to the present. Perhaps it was a moment when someone really needed a listening ear or a helping hand, and I had the grace to step in. Perhaps it was a difficult or complicated task, and I had the grace to focus really well on the situation. I pause and give thanks to God for those grace-filled moments.

I now look to tomorrow. What moment tomorrow could really use my full attention? In which moment may I be tempted to get lost in thought or lose in some diversion? I speak with God about the concrete moments that might challenge my full presence tomorrow.

I bow before my prayer spot before leaving.

What Do I Seek? Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

“[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” — Genesis 3:8-9 “The two disciples heard [John the Baptist] say this, and they followed him, When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’” —John 1:37-38

I make the sign of the cross.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today.

In my heart, I hear God asking me, “Where are you?” I sit with that question awhile before I even try to answer. I then begin by describing to God, as best I can, where I am today—mentally, physically, and most important, spiritually. I share with God my strongest thoughts and emotions. I try not to place judgments on those thoughts and emotions; I simply name them and turn them over to God.

Now, using prayerful imagination, I listen for anything the Lord might be trying to tell me at this moment. If I “hear” nothing, then I simply sit in God’s presence as I present my response to his “Where are you?” Question. I see Jesus’ face before me, looking at me with love in his eyes. I hear him ask, “What do you seek?” I sit with that question awhile before I try to answer. I then begin to answer the Lord’s question in a concrete way. I tell him about my great desires for myself, my family, my friends, my work, and so on. I listen for anything Jesus might be trying to tell me at this moment. If I “hear” nothing, then I simply sit in his presence as I present my response to his “What do you seek?” Question.

I close by making the sign of the cross.

Who Wore God's Face Today? Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I begin by praying the Our Father. I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I feel his presence around me and rest in it.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I look back on my day and ask God, "Who wore your face for me today? At what moment did you come to me through the words or actions of another person?" I relish that moment. I give thanks and praise for the gift of that person in my life.

I look again at my day and ask God, "In what person did I fail to find your presence? What person did I judge to be without goodness?" I relive that difficult moment in my mind, speaking with God about why that moment was so difficult for me. I say to God whatever wells up in my heart. I ask for wisdom. I beg forgiveness. I ask for healing. I ask how God was hidden in this person and how I might call forth that presence the next time I encounter that person.

I look again at my day and ask God, "Was there some person I encountered today who needed me to be your hands? Your feet? Your voice? Your presence? Did I succeed in manifesting your presence for this person?" I try to identify one person for whom I failed to be God's presence. I ask for wisdom, forgiveness, healing. I then try to come up with one person for whom I did succeed at being the presence of God. I relish this moment, giving thanks for it.

I ask God to show me a person who might really need me to be God's presence the next time I encounter her or him I praydream that moment—that is, I play out in my prayerful imagination how it might go if I truly am able to manifest God's presence for this person tomorrow or the next day. I try to identify one grace I might need to make this happen. I ask God for this grace right now.

If I feel called to do so, I promise God to do a particular thing based on what I've prayed about during this Examen.

I end by making the sign of the cross.

Today's Surprises Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

Gratitude, Praydream

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I thank God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I received today.

I ask God to show me a negative surprise from this past day.

In my imagination, I replay the moment(s) of my day that were affected by that negative surprise, paying attention to both my interior response (attitude/disposition) and my exterior response (words/actions). I ask God for forgiveness for any response that was not from his inspiration, and I thank God for any response that was from him.

I ask God to show me the biggest positive surprise of my day.

In my imagination, I replay the moment(s) of my day that were affected by that positive surprise, again paying attention to my interior and exterior response. I ask God for forgiveness for any response that was not from him (Ingratitude, for example), and thank God for any that was.

I look to tomorrow. I ask God to show me a concrete way I could surprise someone tomorrow. It could be something big, such as getting a person a gift or apologizing for something I've done wrong. Or it could be something small, such as not being so grumpy with the coworker who gets under my skin.

I ask God to help me desire to create this surprising moment. I try to stir up excitement in my heart about it, imagining the good that will come from it.

If I feel called to do so, I resolve to do it and not back out.

I end by singing or humming the refrain of my favorite hymn.

My Relationship with God, Others, Self Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few minutes in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I reflect on my relationship with God. I talk to God about it. How is our relationship going? Do I feel close to or distant from God right now? Have I spent quality time with God, or have I been neglectful? Do I get a sense that God is very close to me when I call on him? Am I bored with God? When I look upon God's "face," do I feel joy? Gratitude? Shame? Fear? I ask God to reveal his perspective on our relationship to me.

I talk to God about my relationship with others at this moment. Lately when I am around others, has my disposition been grumpy? Friendly? Passive? Affirming? Is there a relationship that has been unusually good or unusually sour? I speak with God about this, asking him to show me his perspective on it.

I talk to God about how my relationship with myself has been going lately. Do I like myself nowadays? Am I mad at myself? Tender or harsh with myself? What factors in my life have led to these attitudes and behaviors toward myself? I speak with God about this asking for his perspective on it.

Now I look over these past three reflections: relationship with God, relationship with others, relationship with self. Which of the three moments felt most powerful to me? In which of these moments did I have the strongest emotional response as I reflected on the relationship? I revisit that one relationship, asking God for forgiveness, giving God thanks, asking God to give me insight to help me move forward in this relationship or to reveal to me some truth about it.

I ask God, "What would you like me to do about this relationship as I move forward? What gradual shifts might I initiate? What parts of the relationship might I nurture? Which parts might I let go of or even put a stop to?"

I ask God, "What specifically can I do tomorrow regarding this relationship?"

If appropriate, I make a commitment to God about how I may proceed in the future of this relationship. I ask God for the help to keep this commitment.

I ask myself if there are any last words I wish to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures: place my hands together as a sign of closure, bow, make the sign of the cross, or say an Our Father.

My Most Important Moments Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I bow before my prayer spot and ask God to make his presence known to me at this moment. I sense God's presence all around and even within me. I linger in this sense of God's presence. I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to show me the most important moment of this day—the moment that had the biggest impact on me or on others, whether that impact be physical, spiritual, or emotional. Why was it so important? How was I feeling, deep down? Were there any negative thoughts or emotions that I did not admit to having (for example, fear of rejection)? Was I spiritually free or unfree in that most important moment? What were the consequences of that moment? As appropriate, I give thanks, I ask for forgiveness, I ask for healing.

If I wish and have the time to do so, I can return to my review of the day, asking God to show me another important moment of the day. I talk with God, using the same questions as above. Again, I give thanks, ask for forgiveness, and ask for healing.

Now, I look to tomorrow. Specifically, what do I think will be my most important moment tomorrow? What are my great desires for that moment? I allow my great desires to well up within me. I place these desires in God's hands and ask God to make them holy. I ask God to show me what grace or virtue I need to be the person I want to be at that moment. I ask for that grace or virtue.

What other important moments may I experience tomorrow? I talk with God, using the reflection questions from the previous step.

If I feel called to do so, I make a concrete resolution to be the kind of person I feel called to be.

I bow before my prayer spot before leaving.

Uncovering Hidden Truths Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

At any given moment there are little truths about your life that lie beneath your consciousness—things you have not yet recognized or acknowledged. These hidden truths are usually, but not always, painful realities that are hard to accept. This Examen tries to dig deeply into your thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and motivations to try to uncover a hidden truth or two. Do not be satisfied with the first couple of inner truths that surface. Keep digging for a few minutes before you settle on the hidden truth you think is most important, which may well be the third or fourth truth that comes to mind.

I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I sit still for a moment and try to turn down the volume on my random thoughts and preoccupations.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to reveal any hidden truths about any of the important relationships in my life. For example, "I didn't realize it, but..."; "I'm angry with ____."; "I'm getting along better with ____."; "I'm not so angry with ____."; "I seem to have forgiven her and not noticed!"; "I'm afraid of ____'s outbursts."; "I'm trying to impress ____."

If a large and striking revelation occurs to me, one that makes me go, "Wow, I hadn't noticed that before" or "Well, I guess it's time to admit the truth of that," then I remain on that one hidden truth for the rest of the Examen. If nothing big shows up, I move on to my subconscious thoughts, feelings and attitudes about recent events in my life, about any attachments I'm clinging to, and about my own relationship with myself. For example, "I didn't realize it, but..."; "I'm sad about ____ moving away."; "I'm not as anxious about that daunting task at the office."; "I'm worried about our finances."; "I'm spending more and more time on useless web browsing."; "I'm clinging too tightly to owning ____, when perhaps God or my life circumstances call me to let it go."; "I'm getting older and am not admitting it to myself."; "I'm not as bad at ____ as I think I am."; "Despite my pessimism, things are turning out OK."

When I have settled on the most important inner truth. I let go of all the others and simply have a conversation with God about this one reality in my life. What emotions am I feeling as I name this truth to God? I steep myself in that emotion for a while and present to God both the truth and its accompanying emotion.

I get really quiet now and try to detect if God is trying to say or do something about this reality. How does God feel about this truth? How does God feel about how I feel? If I feel called to do so, I listen for God's message to me, or I await his touch on my heart. I ask God, "What would you have me do about this? How should this truth affect who I am? I listen for what might be an answer from God.

If I feel called to do so, I make a commitment to God about this. I ask God for help to be faithful to my commitment.

I close by praying the Glory Be or the Our Father.

My Thoughts, Words, and Deeds Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I quietly myself and slow my breathing. I feel myself soften and melt. I begin to turn down my thoughts and ask God to make his presence known. I sense God's presence around me and linger in it. I rest in this experience for a moment.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to reveal my thoughts today. What were my strongest thoughts? What strong opinions did I hold? What attitudes did I carry with me? What presumptions or conclusions did I make? How did I perceive myself, my situation, and the people, places, and events of my day?

When I come upon a strong and influential thought from the day, I sit with it for a moment. Did it come from a place of spiritual freedom or from a place of unfreedom? Did it lead me to greater or lesser spiritual freedom? Did it lead me to greater faith, hope, and love or lesser faith, hope, and love?

I give thanks for the thoughts that came from the true Spirit, and I ask forgiveness if I allowed unfreedoms within me to influence my thoughts.

I repeat steps 3-5, this time reviewing my words. I ask God to show me the strongest or most important words that I spoke today. I ponder the source of my words. I give thanks or ask forgiveness whenever appropriate.

I repeat steps 3-5, this time reviewing my deeds. What did I do that was loving and kind? What did I do that was unloving and unhelpful? What motivated my deeds? I give thanks or ask forgiveness where needed.

I now look to tomorrow. What thoughts and attitudes do I desire to hold tomorrow about myself? About the people around me? About the situations I encounter? What do I desire to say tomorrow to the specific people I'll probably encounter? What do I desire to do tomorrow? What deeds of love am I called to perform? I listen for God's voice.

I make some concrete resolution based on what arose in their prayer time.

I ask myself if there are any last words I wish to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures: I place my hands together as a sign of closure, bow, make the sign of the cross, or say an Our Father.

The Goldilocks Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind quiet down. I take a deep breath and ask God to make his presence known around and in me. I feel this presence and soak in it.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Sitting in God's presence, I look over my past day, searching for any person, place, thing, or activity to which I am clinging too tightly. To whom or what am I too attached? Too dependent on? I dig deeper and see if I can find two or three answers to this question. When I land on the most important one, I spend time speaking with God about it, asking for advice, forgiveness, or healing.

With God, I return to my sweep over the day, this time searching for any person, place, thing, or activity I am avoiding. From whom or what am I running? Actively ignoring? Resisting? Pushing out of my life? Again, I work diligently at this search until I have found two or three answers. I then speak with God about the most important one. Again, I ask God for advice, forgiveness, and healing. I listen quietly, waiting for God to respond.

With God, I return to my day a third time, this time searching for any person, place, thing, or activity to which my relationship is just right. Which gift of God do I seem to be using just as God would want me to? For example, "I like my job, but today I didn't let it keep me from coaching my kid's soccer game. Thanks, Lord." What went right today, and what person, place, thing, or activity do I have to thank for it? I give praise to the creator of all good gifts.

Finally, I sweep back over this prayer time. What moment was the most enlightening or moving? I return to that moment and speak with God about it. I dwell on this important point for a while. I now look to tomorrow. Given what I've experienced in this Examen, do I feel called to make any changes in my thoughts, words, or actions? If so, I commit to doing so. I ask God for help to follow through.

I end by making the sign of the cross.

My Repulsion's, Inspirations, and Desires Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking back on my day, I ask God to show me the moments in which I was repulsed by someone or something. To be repulsed means to feel uncontrollably driven to reject or flee from that person or thing. When did that happen today? What person did I encounter that led me to feel disgust? Fear? Anger? Loathing? Was there some incident, task, place, discussion, or thing that drove me to want to run the other way or to react violently? I speak to God about this, asking for forgiveness, advice, and healing.

I look over my day a second time, asking God to reveal the moments I felt inspired to do something good or to be someone noble. Did I encounter someone today who inspired me? Did something happen today that filled me with good and holy passion and warmth? Did I see, hear, or experience something that made me feel that way? I speak to God about this, giving thanks and praise for this moment.

I look at my day one last time, asking God to bring to mind the moments in which I felt filled with great desires—desires to do good and holy things and to be a good and holy person. Great desires are those God plants in my heart; they are ultimately desires for faith, hope, and love. Was there a moment today when I felt such desires, even if I wasn't fully conscious of it at the time? Was there a moment today when I thought about the future with wholesome and loving dreams? I thank and praise God for this moment. I ask God if this moment truly came from him and I pause in silence to listen for a response. I am open and receptive to God's response to me, whatever it is.

I now review my prayer time and these three reflections on repulsions, inspirations, and desires. Of the three reflections, which one has most enlightened or moved me? I return to that moment and linger there awhile. What is the primary emotion I feel as I reflect on this? I tell God about how I'm feeling right at this moment, and I listen for God's response.

Given my reflection on today, I now look to tomorrow: “Is there anything concrete that you are calling me to do tomorrow, Lord?” “Given my repulsion’s, inspirations, and desires today, who am I called to be tomorrow?”

If I feel led to do so, I make some commitment to God about tomorrow. I ask God for the help to fulfill my commitment.

I close this Examen in my usual way, or perhaps by quietly whispering, over and over again: “Thy will be done, Lord Thy will be done, Lord Thy will be done, Lord.”

Reviewing Today's Encounters Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

In the Traditional Examen you pray over your day, moment by moment. In the “Reviewing Today’s Places, Things, and Activities” Examen, you prayerfully review your day not moment by moment but rather place by place, thing by thing, activity by activity. In this Examen you pray person by person, zooming in on the most important encounter of the day.

I quiet myself. I slow my breathing. I sit very still for a moment and try to turn down my thoughts. I remember that I am in the presence of God.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today.

I ask God to show me each person I encountered today. I ask God to reveal which encounter today was the most important one. That is, which conversation had the strongest impact on me and/or on the other person? It could be a negative or positive encounter. I zoom in on that one encounter. In that specific encounter, was I spiritually free or unfree? What led to my feeling spiritually free or unfree with this person? How does today’s encounter relate to past encounters with this person? In general, am I spiritually free or unfree with this person? What leads to this spiritual freedom or unfreedom? What were the consequences of my spiritual freedom or unfreedom with this person? If I was free, what good came from it? I relish this good and praise God for it. If I was unfree, what bad came from it? I allow myself to feel the pain of this and ask God for forgiveness and healing.

Now I look to the future. When might I encounter this person again? What are my great desires for my relationship with this person? I allow my great desires to well up within me. I place these desires in God’s hands and ask God to make them holy. I ask the Lord to show me what grace or virtue I need to be the person I want to be in this relationship I ask for that grace or virtue.

If I feel called to do so, I make a resolution to be the kind of person I feel called to be in the relationships upon which I have reflected in this Examen.

I close by praying the Our Father.

My Relationship with God Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

“Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’ They answered, ‘John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Messiah of God.’” —Luke 9:18-20

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today.

I think about my relationship with God. I talk to God about how my relationship has been going lately. Are we getting along well? Do I feel close to or distant from God right now? Have I spent quality time with God, or have I been neglectful? Do I sense that God is close to me when I call on him? Am I bored with God? When I look upon the face of God do I feel joy? Gratitude? Shame? Fear? I ask God to show me how he sees our relationship.

I read reflectively the Bible passage in which Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Quietly and peacefully, I watch the video in my mind of how today has played out. As I watch each scene, I ask, “Where was Christ in this moment? How did Christ come to me in this moment?”

After looking over a few of the details of my day, I back up and look at the big picture. I ask myself, “Given all that’s happened today, who was Christ for me today?” Was he a teacher? Friend? Consoles? Coach? Silent observer? Spouse? Savior? Parent?

I say to Christ, “Lord, today you were _____ for me.

Now I ask, “If you, Lord, were _____, then who am I in relationship to you?” I might say, “Lord, you were my teacher, and I was your student” or “Lord, you were my consoled, and I was a brokenhearted soul in need of your healing.” I speak to God awhile about the way my relationship played itself out today.

I look to tomorrow. How do I want or need Christ to be present to me tomorrow? Do I need him to be my teacher? My friend? My savior? I tell Christ what it is I want or need from his presence in my life as I move forward.

I close by praying the Our Father.

Shifts in My Spirit Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

You can use this particular Examen to reflect on the big picture or on the small picture. You can reflect on anything from a subtle shift in your day to a big change in your disposition over the past few years. You may want to use this Examen at moments of transition, such as the end of a semester or on New Year's Day.

I make the sign of the cross, I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I feel his presence around me and rest in it.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking over the past few weeks, months, or even years, I ask God for the grace to see any shift that may have occurred in my spirit. For example, have I grown despondent lately? Have I snapped at people frequently? Am I quieter than I used to be? Am I more at peace? Have I grown confident? Lazy? Anxious? Needy? Prayerful? Loving? Forgiving? Despairing? Pessimistic? Hopeful? Preoccupied? Fearful? Relaxed? Bitter? Accepting? In what way have I changed?

I may identify several shifts in my spirit, but I ask God to reveal to me the most influential one. I zoom in on that one. Has this been a good shift? A bad shift? A mixed bag? I ask God to show me how this shift has played a role in my life. I ask God to show me his perspective on it. I ask God to show me how he has been present in this shift. I also ponder, In what ways has this shift not been from God?

I ask forgiveness for and healing from any part of this that is not from God.

If this shift has had a good impact on my life, I spend some long moments in thanksgiving: "Thank you for the growth, Lord." "Thank you for healing this wound." "Thank you for giving me the grace to move on." "Thank you for letting me feel more confident in myself."

I ask God to show me what I am called to do about this shift. Should I "feed the shift," working toward growing further in this direction? Should I "shift the shift," working toward changing course—adjusting my attitude, changing my behavior, and so on? Is there anyone, such as my spouse or my spiritual director, whom I should speak to about this shift? What am I called to do? Who am I called to be?

If I feel called to do so, I make a promise to God to do what I'm called to do, to be who I'm called to be in this area of my life.

I end by making the sign of the cross.

Reviewing Today's Places, Things, and Activities Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I quietly myself and slow my breathing. I feel myself soften and melt, and begin to turn down my thoughts. I ask God to make his presence known. I sense God's presence around me and linger in it. I rest in this experience for a moment.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I review the places I've been today: home, workplace, the grocery store, a friend's apartment, the neighborhood park. Of all the places I've been, which am I most grateful for? Which place makes it easy for me to be closer to God and more loving toward others? I thank God for this place and tell God how much it means to me.

Of all the places I've been today, which do I find to be a difficult place? Is there any place that is not healthy for me? Is there any place that I'm too attached to? I speak with God about this. I ask God for forgiveness, advice, and healing.

I review the material things in my life: car, phone, computer, clothes and accessories, food and drink. For which am I most grateful today? Which leads me closer to God and to becoming a better Christian? I thank God for this blessing in my life.

Are any of these things keeping me from growing closer to God or others? Do any of these things lead me to sin? Am I too attached to any of them? Have I made a god of any of them? Is my ownership excessive, and am I being called to give something away and live more simply? I speak with God about this. I ask God for forgiveness, advice, and healing.

In the same way, I review the activities of my day: going to work, eating, playing with the kids, exercising, watching TV, working hard at a task, sleeping, praying. For which am I most grateful? Which activities seem most "godly"? Which lead me closer to God and others? Which is a particularly good and healthy activity in my life? I speak with God about this, giving thanks.

Are any of my activities unhealthy, unholy, or unwholesome? Do any of my activities lead me away from faith, hope, and love? Do any lead me away from God? Am I addicted to any of these activities? I speak with God about this. I ask God for forgiveness, advice, and healing.

I look back over this prayer time. What was the most enlightening or moving moment (regardless of whether it was enjoyable or painful)? What was my prayer at that moment? I go back to that moment and linger there,

asking God if there is anything more he'd like to say or do in regard to this. Reflecting on this inspired moment, I ask God, "What, Lord, would you have me do tomorrow in regard to this place, thing, or activity?"

If appropriate, I make a commitment to God about this and ask for his help to keep that commitment.

I bow before my prayer spot before leaving.

My Past, Present, and Future Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind begin to quiet down. I take a deep breath. I ask God to make his presence known around and within me. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to reveal to me my spiritual state of being this past day. What were my primary feelings throughout the day? Was I spiritually free or unfree? Or perhaps there were parts of the day wherein I was free and other parts wherein I was unfree. I ask God to show me the consequences of my spiritual freedoms and unfreedoms. I thank God for the good that came today. I ask for forgiveness and healing from any painful moments of the day.

I ask God to reveal to me my spiritual state at this present moment. What are my strongest thoughts and feelings at this very moment? I turn over these thoughts and feelings to God and ask God to make them holy. At this very moment, am I spiritually free or unfree? I give thanks or ask for healing.

I now look to the future. What attitudes and feelings am I likely to have tomorrow? Will it be a challenge to live in God's freedom tomorrow? If so, how and why will it be challenging? What might be the most challenging moment? What grace or virtue (strength, fortitude, patience, fidelity) might I need from God to live in his freedom? I ask God for that grace.

Now, perhaps the most important question: What would tomorrow be like if I were spiritually free all day long? I allow myself to daydream such a wonderful day. I allow myself to experience great desires as I imagine myself moving through the day tomorrow. I ask God to show me the way to walk through this sort of day.

If I feel called to do so, I make a resolution to be the kind of person I feel called to be. I resolve, to the best of my ability, to live in freedom—in a realistic and particular way. I resolve to adopt one perspective over another, to say these words instead of those, to do this thing rather than the other thing.

I place my hands together as a sign of closure and bow.

My Emotions Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Instead of reviewing my day hour by hour, I ask God to review my day emotion by emotion. How did I feel when I woke up this morning? As I was showering, eating breakfast, dressing for the day? As the morning progressed? And so on. I quickly pass over the fleeting emotions but dwell on the more pervasive ones or those I hadn't noticed before. I also speak with God as I notice shifts in my emotions throughout the day.

I speak with God about the strongest emotions of the day. Were they of the good spirit, the part of me that is moving closer to God and deeper in faith, hope, and love? Were they of the false spirit, the spirit in me that is stuck in earthly thoughts, desires, cravings, or obsessions?

I choose the strongest emotion of the day, and I speak to God about the way I responded to that emotion as the day progressed. What impact did this emotion have on me? Did I even acknowledge the emotion as I experienced it, or was I unaware of it? Did I consciously choose how to act on this emotion, or did I allow the emotion to influence how I would think, speak, and act? I speak with God about this, thanking him for my responses that were in sync with my Christian calling, and asking for forgiveness and healing when they were not.

Knowing that my emotions are only partially in my control, I reflect on what emotions I want to have tomorrow. If I could choose only one, what would it be: Joy? Peace? Loving-kindness? Courage? Gratitude? I pick one of these and imagine myself living out tomorrow with this emotion as my

companion. I ask God to grant me the grace to be open to this emotion tomorrow and to put it to good use if and when it does come.

Are there any last words I want to say to the Lord?

I close with one or two of the following gestures: bow, make the sign of the cross, or say an Our Father.

My Greatest Fear Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

Today's Examen invites us to stare right into the face of our fears. It takes some work and some courage to get to the very bottom of our fears. This spiritual work can be deeply consoling in the end, but it is not for the faint of heart; so we recommend you do this Examen only if you're up for it. Otherwise, save it for another time.

I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I feel myself soften and melt. I begin to turn down my thoughts and ask God to make his presence known. I sense God's presence around me and linger in it. I rest in this experience for a moment.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I look over my day and ask God, "Where did fear play a role in my thoughts, words, actions, or inactions?" I am not satisfied until I come up with an answer to that question. (It may take a while.) After I've located one fear, I look again and see if God is trying to show me one or two other moments when fear played a role.

Once I have identified the most important fear, I zoom in on it. I say out loud to God, "Lord, I am afraid of ____." What exactly is so scary about this? (We're trying to get to the deeper fears beneath the superficial ones.) I keep digging deeper and deeper, trying to get to what I'm really afraid of. I will know it when it snatches my breath and I have a hard time saying it out loud.

I gather up the courage to say it out loud to God. And then I say it again and again until it gets a tiny bit easier to say. I speak with God about it and remain open to whatever God might say or do.

I ask God an important question; "Lord, is this fear realistic, or is it irrational?" For example, some people discover an unconscious fear of losing their job or having their spouse leave them, when all the while their conscious, rational self knows that there is practically no chance of this. If this is the case, I ask God for the ability to acknowledge the fear but not let it control my thoughts, words, or actions. On the other hand, if the fear is a reasonable one (I may actually get laid off soon), I ask God, "What would you and I do then, Lord? How could we handle it?" If I listen carefully, with peace in my heart, God will often intervene at this moment, consoling me by showing me how even this worst-case scenario will be manageable. God may even show me how growth and God's good will can emerge from such a difficult moment.

Looking to tomorrow, I ask God for a particular grace or gift that will prevent this fear from getting the best of me. I pray for courage, peace of mind and heart, trust in God, and acceptance of whatever comes.

I ask myself if there are any last words I wish to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures; place my hands together as a sign of closure, bow, make the sign of the cross, or say an Our Father.

My Daily Habits Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

Humans are very much creatures of habit. God made us this way so that we don't have to rely solely on good judgment and decision making in each situation that arises. Instead, we can train our minds, bodies, and souls to habitually, naturally do the right thing. Today's Examen encourages a reflection on habits.

I ask God to make his presence known to me at this moment. I linger in God's presence and then make the sign of the cross.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking over my day, I ask God to show me a few of my habits. I try to see my one thought or action today that is actually typical of the way I think or act. For example, I may find myself saying to Christ, "Lord, looking over my day, I see that I am in the habit of..."; criticizing and nitpicking my coworkers; staying focused on my work, once I've had a strong cup of coffee; putting myself down for the smallest things; wasting time on the Internet; greeting people warmly when they walk in the door.

It's usually easier to see my unhealthy habits than to see the healthy ones. When I do find an unhealthy habit, I speak with God about it. Perhaps I'll ask God for forgiveness or for healing, and for ideas about how to break the habit.

But I don't want to settle for simply looking at my bad habits. I won't rest until I find a couple of good habits in my day today. When I do find them, I will give thanks and praise. I speak to God about why I'm so grateful for this good habit.

I now look to tomorrow. What bad habit do I want to break? What good habit do I want to cultivate? What graces will I ask God for in order to help me break these particular bad habits and grow these particular good habits? I speak with God about this.

I end by singing or humming the refrain of my favorite hymn.

God, Thank you. I'm Sorry. Help! Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I make the sign of the cross and ask God for the gift of his presence. I feel his presence around me and rest in it.

I address God spontaneously about the things, people, and moments I am most grateful for, I say, "Thank you, God, for . . ." And just let my mind drift from one gift to the next, without consciously steering my thoughts one way or another. I take note of what I find my heart and soul are saying to God at this moment.

Next, I talk to God about the things, people, and moments about which I feel bad. I say, "Forgive me, God, for . . ." And just let myself go. I listen carefully to what I find my heart and soul are saying to God at this moment.

Finally, I address God about the future things, future people, and future moments for which I will need God's help. Thinking about the coming day, I pray, "God, help me with. . ." And just let myself go.

I close by praying the Our Father.

I'm Drained Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I sit still for a moment and try to turn down the volume on my random thoughts and preoccupations.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking back over the day, I ask God to reveal to me which moment was the most draining. In my imagination. God and I return to that draining moment, and I relive it—this time with God right beside me. I let myself become steeped in the moment, particularly in the most difficult thing about that moment. I let myself feel the strong emotions—lethargy, despair, and whatever other feelings are present in me. I present this draining moment to God and tell God what was going on in my heart and soul in that moment. If I handled it OK, I thank God for that. If I handled it badly, I ask for pardon and peace.

I ask God to speak to me about this moment. I remain receptive to anything God says or does.

Looking over my day a second time, I ask God to reveal the most life-giving moment. I again return with God to that moment, reliving both the exterior events and my interior dispositions. Steeped in joy, gratitude, and relief, I give it all to God. I talk with God about it, making sure to express my thoughts and feelings and to let God speak freely to me.

I now look to tomorrow. What may be a draining moment of tomorrow? (Most of the time, we have a pretty good guess about this.) I speak with God about it, telling God how I feel about this possibility; I ask God to show me how I can prepare spiritually for this potentially draining moment. I ask God to keep me from contributing negatively to the situation by presuming the worst. I allow for the possibility that everything will go fine and pray to receive the virtue of hope.

I look to tomorrow a second and final time. What may be the most life-giving moment? I allow myself to get excited about this moment. I let myself fill up with good and wholesome desires about it. I tell God all about it. I ask God to help me prepare spiritually for the possibility that it won't be as life-giving as I hope. I ask God for the ability to say, "That would be OK, too."

I ask myself if there are any last words I wish to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures: place my hands together as a sign of closure, bow, make the sign of the cross, or say an Our Father.

How I Treated Others Today Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” —
Matthew 25:40

I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I sit still for a moment and try to turn down the volume on my random thoughts and preoccupations.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God, “Of the people I encountered today, who was the most outcast? The weakest and most fragile? The most difficult for me to be around?” In my imagination, I replay the moment when I encountered that person.

I speak to God about my observations. I tell God my thoughts, words, and actions toward that person. I ask God for forgiveness for any thoughts, words, or actions that were unkind or uncharitable. I thank God for the moments when I seemed to have the right disposition.

I ask God, “What do you see when you see this person? What do you have to say to me about this person?”

I ask God, “What am I called to do for this person? Who am I called to be for this person?”

I get more concrete and specific: “God, what if anything, am I called to do or be for this person tomorrow?” I ask God to give me the ability to do these things.

If I feel called to do so, I make some sort of resolution.

I end by bowing and making the sign of the cross.

Gratitude, God Sightings, Praydream Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

St. Ignatius believed that gratitude was among the highest of virtues. In fact, he believed that ingratitude was the root of all sin. Sin is basically a misuse of the gifts God has given us. If we are truly grateful for the gift, then we certainly won't misuse it. This particular Examen has you spend the entire time naming the blessings in your life and thanking God for each of them. Any time is a good time to praise and thank God, but we especially recommend this Examen when you are feeling down, having a bad day, or being unusually self-critical.

I quiet myself and slow my breathing. I sit still for a moment and try to turn down the volume on my random thoughts and preoccupations.

I ask God to reveal, in a special way today, all the blessings of my life—the really big ones and the small ones, too.

I ask myself, “What am I most grateful for today? What fills me with joy and gratitude?” Usually, one person, place, event, or thing will pop up immediately. I name this gift before God: “Lord, I am so grateful for your gift to me of ____.” I repeat this a few times, letting the gratitude sink deep.

I relish this one gift for a while. If I am most grateful for my sister, for example, I place her face before my mind's eye. I see her smile; I watch one of her gestures that always warms my heart. And I just sit there, filled with love. All the while, I say, “Thank you, Lord.” I may be grateful for a thing or an organization, for my cozy house and the comfort it offers. Perhaps I am most grateful for something that happened recently. Whatever gift is my focus, I stay with it in prayerful imagination, allowing the good feelings to well up within me, all the while saying, “Thank you, Lord.”

I now more lightly watch as, one by one, in chaotic and random order, the big and small gifts of my life float before my mind's eye: my health—“Thank you, Lord”; my relatives (even the difficult ones!)—“Thank you, Lord”; my talent for making people laughter—“Thank you, Lord”; the exotic meal I successfully cooked last night—“Thank you, Lord.” On and on—a Thanksgiving parade to rival Macy's!

I ask myself if there are any last words I want to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures: I place my hands together as a sign of closure, bow, make the sign of the cross, or say and Our Father.

Am I Free or Unfree Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

We are spiritually free when our spiritual and emotional state of being is healthy, when we are desirous of being a faithful, hopeful, and loving person. We are spiritually unfree when our negative emotions and temptations have gotten the better of us, when we were too angry, sad, tempted, or scared to think straight.

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

Looking back, I ask God, "What was my most unfree moment today?" That is, at what moment was I being carried away by my own fears, resentments, cravings, addictions, anxieties, or despairing thoughts? In my imagination, I return to that specific moment in my day. I imagine God and myself watching this moment together, side by side. God and I watch as my heart fills to the brim with the negative emotion that swept me away.

I speak to God about what I see and ask God for forgiveness or maybe for healing. I allow God to show me his perspective of the situation. Is there anything that I sense God is trying to tell me about this? I talk with him about this and acknowledge my deepest emotions about it.

Looking back again, I ask, "What was my most spiritually free moment today?" In which moment did I feel and act free from negativity, low and earthy thoughts and emotions? At what point did I feel most alive and most in sync with God.?

I imagine God and myself watching this grace-filled moment. We replay the moment in my prayer. We observe not only what happened, but also what was going on deep in my heart. I speak to God about this and allow God to show me his perspective. We talk about it for a while. We celebrate that moment.

Now God and I look to tomorrow. How can I live tomorrow out of that freedom that I felt in today's grace-filled moment? What attitudes and behaviors will I adopt in order to avoid the pit of that unfree moment? What is God calling me to do to live in spiritual freedom?

I make whatever commitments I feel called to make. I ask God for help to keep those commitments.

I close by praying the Glory Be and/or the Our Father.

Discovering My Weak Spots Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

Before his conversion, St. Ignatius fought in a battle defending the fortress of Pamplona, Spain. Later, after his conversion, he used that experience to talk about how the spirit of negativity within all of us tries to attack us at our weakest spots. This Examen invites you to discover “the hole in your fortress wall.”

I make the sign of the cross and remind myself that I am in the presence of God.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today.

Looking over the past day, I ask God to show me how a particular situation played into one of my weak spots. Which of my “buttons” was pushed today? What caused me to be over sensitive, prickly, overly emotional, neglectful, obtuse, or self-deceptive? At what moment did I . . . React too strongly? Not react strongly enough (ignore/neglect)? Avoid an uncomfortable situation? Shirk my duties? Respond defensively, unkindly, crudely? Allow emotions to overwhelm me and get in the way? Refuse to acknowledge my emotions?

I may admit to God, “Lord, my sister really gets under my skin.” “I noticed that I turn to food when I’m down.” “Jealousy of my coworker led me to gossip about him.” “I took my problems home today and snapped at my loved one.” I say what I need to say. I ask for forgiveness and healing. I ask for healing of anyone I may have hurt because of this weak point in my spiritual life.

I now look to tomorrow and the days to come. I ask God to show me how this fortress hole affects me and others. What situations may try me in this sensitive area? I ask God to show me which virtues (strength, courage, humility, honesty, gentleness) will help me shore up this sensitive area. I pray for that virtue now: “God, please grant me the _____ to deal with my own problem with _____.” I name the virtue repeatedly, asking God to grant it to me so that I might serve him better.

I close by praying the Our Father.

Identifying Inner Wounds Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

This Examen leads you to pray about the wounds within you—an emotional hurt in your heart, psyche, or soul caused by something painful that has happened. If you're not in the right space for it (for example, you're having a bad day, or you're doing this Examen in a very public place, or you've been down lately and you fear this might make it worse), then you might want to pass over this one until a day comes when you are ready for it.

I ask God to make his presence known to me in this moment. I place my hands, palms up, in a gesture of receptivity.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to show me a wound in my heart at this moment. This wound causes me to feel hurt, frightened, angry, resentful, or remorseful. I allow God to take me to that difficult place in my soul. Courageously sit in the midst of this difficult moment. Perhaps I ask Jesus to hold my hand as I prayerfully relive the worst parts.

I ask God to show me the strongest emotion I have at this very moment as I rehash this painful experience. I speak aloud to God about how I am feeling. I say, "God, I am furious (or sad, or grief-stricken, or confused)." I sit with God and with these feelings for a moment.

I ask God to show me how this wound might become worse—growing in size or becoming infected. If I were to allow this wound to lead me away from faith, hope, and love, what might that look like? Concretely, in what ways might this wound tempt me to behave poorly? I ask God to help me prevent this from happening. If I need a particular grace to help me guard against this poor behavior, I ask for that grace from God right now.

I sit in the silence for just a moment, giving God a chance to do whatever God wants with me right now. Perhaps, in this quiet moment, God will just place his warm fatherly hand on my head. Perhaps God will say something to me. Perhaps we'll just sit together in the silence. It's OK if God seems to be saying and doing nothing at all. I trust that he will heal this wound in his own time and his own way.

I prayerfully daydream for just a moment, imagining a day when I am no longer feeling wounded about this. What would that be like? What might be my attitudes, perspectives, thoughts, feelings, words, and actions if I were truly a recovered soul? What grace would I need to begin to heal? I ask God for that grace right now.

I ask God to show me how he might make good come out of this hurtful thing. How can this wound make me stronger? More loving? More humble? More spiritually mature? How can I become a more effective disciple of God's love through this wound? I ask God to make good use of this wound—to use this experience of mine for his greater glory.

If I feel called to do so, I make some concrete resolution to be a person of faith, hope, and love in the midst of this painful reality in my life. I trust that God will be there with me through it all.

I place my hands together and pray an Our Father.

Fears, Attachments, Control, and Entitlement Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

This Examen, which helps us identify our fears, attachments, need for control, and illusions of entitlement (F.A.C.E.), is a particularly challenging one. If you're not in the right space for it—you're having a bad day, you're doing this Examen in a very public place, you've been down lately and you fear this might make it worse—than you might want to pass over this one until a day comes when you are ready for it.

I get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind begin to quiet down. I take a deep breath and ask God to make his presence known around and in me. I feel this presence and soak in it.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I spend a little extra time asking God for a double dose of grace to pray this particularly difficult Examen. It is difficult because it demands that I look at some of the darker parts of my personality. I will ask God to show me ways in which I have tried to save F.A.C.E. Recently, I can easily fall into one of two traps: either denying that I have a problem or unlovingly condemning myself. I need the extra grace to allow God to lead in a firm but unconditionally loving way.

Looking over my day, I ask God to show me what Fears were predominant in my heart. I try to dig deeply and see what I am really afraid of (it may not be what I expect, because our true fears are often hidden beneath our level of consciousness.). As soon as I name that fear, I simply take note of it and move to the next step.

Looking over my day, I ask God to show me any Attachments to which I've been clinging lately, I might be overly attached to a person (infatuated), to an idea (stubborn), or to a behavior (bad habit). I pay particular attention to my emotional attachment to people, ideas, or behaviors. Once I've identified a particular attachment, I take note of it and move on to the next step.

Looking over my day, I ask God to show me any situation in which I'm trying too hard to exert Control. I may be trying to control people, organizations, or outcomes. It's difficult to admit that I'm

controlling, so I ask God for the courage to do so. When I find my particular obsession with control, I simply acknowledge it and move to the next step.

Looking over my day, I ask God to show me if I have any silly notions of Entitlement. For example: “I worked hard today, I deserve this doughnut/this drink/this cigarette.” Or “I’m an important person; I’m entitled to skip my share of the chores, the menial tasks, the grunt work.” Or “I’m the victim here. I have a right to blow up, to pout, to be passive, to feel sorry for myself.” If I find a false Entitlement, I name it before God and move on.

Now, I place before God the four discoveries I’ve made: one Fear, one Attachment, one need to Control, and one Entitlement. I ask God to show me which of the four is most strongly affecting my life right now. I zoom in on that one issue and leave the other three behind. I ask God for insight. I ask for forgiveness for the times when I’ve let it get the best of me.

I ask God to show me what tomorrow may look like if I acted out of freedom from this issue. In specific terms, how would my day be different if I didn’t allow this issue to rule me? How would my emotions, thoughts, words, and actions be different.

I give this issue to God. I say, “Lord, today I wish to turn over my _____ to you. I ask you to take over and become the Lord of my life, rather than let this issue lord over me.” I ask God to help me live my life in the freedom of God’s mercy.

I end by singing or humming a verse or refrain from my favorite hymn.

Aces and Deuces Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

This Examen will help you reflect on the “hand of cards” you have been dealt—your unique set of gifts and weaknesses.

I quietly myself and slow my breathing. I sit still for a moment and try to turn down the volume on my random thoughts and preoccupations.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today.

I reflect on this day in a unique way: I imagine my own thoughts, words, and actions to be my “hand of cards” in a poker game. In poker, the aces are the highest-ranking cards, and the deuces (the twos) are the lowest. Looking at my “hand” of good personal qualities and not-so-good personal qualities that showed up today, I ask God, “What are my aces, Lord?” My smarts? My patience? My sense of humor? My listening skills? I ask God to point out two or three of my aces and how they served me and others well as I played my hand today. I speak with God about this. I thank God for the gifts and talents I’ve been given.

I look again at my day, asking God, “What are my deuces, Lord?” Being overly serious? Restless? Passive? Self-centered? I ask God to point out two or three of my deuces and how they hampered me today. I speak with God about this. I ask for help with these difficult cards of mine.

I now look to tomorrow, imagining how it might progress. I think about the people I will see, the tasks I’ll be working on, and so on. I ask God to show me how I might play my cards. How might I use my aces for the good of all, and how might I minimize the impact of my deuces? For example, “Because I am impatient and my spouse is not, maybe I can handle _____ and let him take care of _____.”

If I feel called to make any sort of commitment to God about the specifics of tomorrow, I do so. I ask God for help with this commitment.

I close this Examen in my usual way, or perhaps by quietly whispering, over and over again, “Thy will be done, Lord . . . Thy will be done, Lord . . . Thy will be done, Lord.”

Ask for Grace Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I begin my prayer by asking God our Father for the grace that I am seeking. Here it will be. . . .” —St. Ignatius of Loyola

The word grace can be understood to mean “spiritual gift” or virtue.” If you could ask God for one spiritual gift right now (courage, peace, clarity, patience, strength), what would it be? St. Ignatius believed that it is important to be aware of “the grace that you are seeking” — that is, the spiritual gift or virtue that you need or want at this moment.

I quiet myself and calm my breathing. I remind myself that I am in the presence of God.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I’ve received today: the good mood I woke up in, a kind word from a friend, my undeserved good health, an easy commute to work, another day with my wonderful spouse.

I ask God to show me the greatest challenge I faced today. How did I meet that challenge? Did I respond in spiritual freedom or un freedom? What were the consequences of my thoughts, feelings, words and actions? If I feel moved to do so, I give thanks, I ask forgiveness, I ask for healing.

I look to my spirit at this very moment. Right now, how am I feeling about this challenge? I tell God about my feelings and listen for any response from God.

I ask the Lord to show me what grace or virtue I may need to meet this challenge tomorrow and in the future (for example: patience, fortitude, generosity, peace of mind and heart). I ask the Lord to make me open to this grace from this moment forward.

I allow myself to daydream about being “filled up” with this grace. What might tomorrow be like if I have this grace with me at all times?

I ask God to give me the grace I need to be the person he is calling me to be. I repeat the name of this grace over and over again before God. I try to sense God quietly filling me with this grace. I praise God for the graces he bestows on me.

If I feel moved to do so, I make a resolution to be the kind of person I feel called to be.

I make the sign of the cross and bow.

Am I Choosing Life or Death? Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I quiet myself and calm my breathing, I remind myself that I am in the presence of God.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I slowly prayerfully read the Bible passage: "Surely this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. See I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Deut. 30:11-20

Looking over my day, I ask myself, "Did I choose life or death today? Was the thrust of my life toward the good or toward the bad?" I do not analyze or dissect the parts of my day. Instead, I look at the overall movement of the day. Was it toward life or toward death? I speak with God about this. I give thanks and ask for forgiveness or for healing—whatever my heart feels inspired to say to God.

Now, I prayerfully imagine tomorrow, asking myself, If I were to choose life tomorrow, what would my day look like? What would it feel like? Perhaps I'll imagine specific things I will do or say that will mean life for me tomorrow. Or perhaps I'll simply pray about my interior disposition. I speak with God about what it means to choose life tomorrow.

If I feel called to do so, I make a commitment to God, asking him to help me to be faithful to that commitment.

I make the sign of the cross and bow.

Praise, Reverence, Service Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I bow before my prayer spot and get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind quiet down. I take a deep breath. I ask God to make his presence known around and in me. I feel this presence and soak in it.

I now spend a while in praise. I start by slowly, quietly saying to God, “I praise you Lord. . . I praise you, Lord. . . I praise you, Lord.”

I then move to praising God for the gifts he’s given me this very day: “I praise you for your gift of my family. . . I praise you for the gift of my job. . . I praise you for my desire to serve you.”

I then move to praising God for his attributes, which have shown up in my day: “I praise you for your mercy—for forgiving me today when I _____. I praise you for your kindness to me today, when I was depressed and you were present to me in the way I needed and right when I needed it. I praise you for your providence, when everything turned out OK during our little crisis this morning.”

I now spend a while in reverence. I acknowledge that God is bigger than everything, even the things that appear so big to me today. For example, “You, God, are bigger than my career. You are bigger than my worry over _____ today. You are bigger than my failure of _____ today or my success over _____ today. You are bigger than my love for _____ today. You are bigger than my craving for _____ today.

I now spend a while in commitment to Christian service. I look to the specific people, places, tasks, and happenings of tomorrow, and I pray, “Lord, help me serve you by loving _____ well. Help me serve you by working diligently on _____. Help me serve you through my talent of _____. Help me serve you by treating _____ with _____.”

I end by singing or humming the refrain of my favorite hymn.

Am I Ready to Die Today Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I get into a comfortable position. I let my muscles relax and my mind begin to quiet down. I take a deep breath. I ask God to make his presence known around and in me. I feel this presence and soak it in.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to help me explore the question, Am I ready to die today? Knowing that God is all-loving and desires me to be with him for eternity, am I ready to join him in heaven?

If I knew that I would die within the next twenty-four hours, what would I want to do with my last day in order to be ready? What would it take for me to do or say the things that would prepare me for death? What graces would I want or need from God?

Now I tease out these ideas a bit more. I pray dream (prayerfully daydream) what it would be like to say and do those very things that keep me from being ready to die. I watch a little movie in my mind in which I live out the concrete things that I've discerned to do. How might it go? What would be the first steps I would take toward being ready to die? I ask God for the graces required to accomplish this.

If I feel called to do so, I make a promise to God to say or do something specific and concrete within the next twenty-four hours that will prepare me for eternal life.

I end by singing or humming the refrain of my favorite hymn.

A Relationship Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two blessings that I received today.

Looking over the recent past, I ask God to show me a person who has been on my mind and in my heart a lot. I let this person bubble up. I get a good look at this person, hear the person's voice, see his or her gestures, and so on.

I ask God why this person has been on my mind lately. I speak with him about this relationship.

I ask God to reveal my strongest emotion when I reflect on my relationship with this person.

I ask God to give me an overview of my relationship with this person. Not a blow-by-blow analysis, but a quiet, contemplative summary so I can see the whole of the relationship. What has this relationship meant to me? Has it led me closer to God, or farther away? What has been the most difficult part of being in this relationship? The most enjoyable? Is the strong emotion I'm feeling in the present moment in sync with the strong emotions I feel as I reflect on the relationship as a whole? I speak with and listen to God about all of this.

I ask God to show me my own emotions and desires about the future of this relationship. What are my great concerns or fears about this relationship? What are my great desires for the relationship? Hopes and dreams? If I desire something in particular. I ask God for it.

I return to the present moment. Has my perspective shifted or have my emotions shifted regarding the issues of the day? What am I called to tomorrow for or with this person? I ask God about this.

I ask myself if there are any more words I want to say to the Lord.

I close with one or two of the following gestures: I sing a hymn, say the Our Father, make the sign of the cross, or bow in prayer before leaving.

A Pending Decision Examen

Reimagining the Examen App

I quietly myself and slow my breathing. I feel myself soften and melt. I ask God to make his presence known. I sense his presence around me and linger in it. I rest in this experience for a moment.

I spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big and small, that I've received today.

I ask God to reveal some decision I need to make. It could be a small decision with immediate effects, or it could be a big decision that is more long-term: a career choice, initiating a significant change in a relationship, making an important commitment. I ask God to lay out the options before me.

I ask God to show me how the factors related to this decision have affected my life in the recent past. I ask God to show me if leaning toward one direction or another has led to greater faith, hope, and love in my life. Has one direction led me closer to God? Has one direction seemed to lead me to a peace that could come only from God?

DI ask God to reveal how this decision might affect the people involved. Will it help them or hurt them? If it will hurt them, is there some higher good that will come from it that would make it worth the hurt?

I ask God to show me my own emotions regarding this decision, particularly any emotions I've not yet acknowledged. I ask God to reveal the source of each emotion. Is it coming from a good spirit or a bad spirit within me? Is this emotion coming from the part of me that is in sync with God or from the part of me that is running from or opposing God?

I surrender this whole matter to God, saying "Thy will be done, O Lord." I ask God to give me a sense of peace about the whole thing, right now. I ask him to take me to the place in my heart that is beyond my emotions so that I may see the situation from a more objective point of view.

If I feel called to make a decision right now, I place that decision before God and ask him to make good of it, even if it is a mistake. If I am called to continue discerning for a while longer, I ask God for the patience to sit and wait for his call. If it is a big decision, I take note of the direction in which God seems to be leading me at this moment, and I note whether or not this seems to be the way God has been nudging me for a while now.

I close this Examen in my usual way, or perhaps by quietly whispering, over and over again, “Thy will be done, Lord . . . Thy will be done, Lord . . . Thy will be done, Lord.”