

PRAYING WITH 'THE EXAMEN'

Cardinal John Dew, in his September column for Welcom, said the following:

“When the Pope uses those words ‘For You Too’ in the first chapter of this document (Gaudete et Exsultate) known as an Apostolic Exhortation, he is telling all of us very strongly that holiness is for everybody and that it is not impossible. Growing in holiness may be difficult at times, but with patience and perseverance we do grow closer to God.

If we are serious about growing in holiness, coming closer to God and living the Gospel intentionally every day, then clearly, we need to be people who reflect daily on how we are doing.

St Ignatius of Loyola, whose feast day we celebrated on 31 July encourages us to engage in what he called ‘The EXAMEN’. Usually the best time of the day for this is at the end of the day.

Very briefly, the Examen is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It is an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in our everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it takes about 10 to 15 minutes each evening.

EXAMEN – IN ESSENCE IT IS TO:

1. Ask God for light

I want to look at my day with God’s eyes, not merely my own.

2. Give thanks

The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

3. Review the day

I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit







4. Face your shortcomings

I face up to what is wrong – in my life and in me

5. Look toward the day to come

I ask where I need God in the day to come.

Over the years I have found various questions to be helpful in this process of reflection and trying to be more aware of how my day has been. I share some of those with you in the hope that they will also assist you in responding to this call to holiness.

-  Where has God been present in my life today? At work? In the car?
-  Have I been a good memory in someone’s life today?
-  Have I walked with someone today or spent time with someone or made their life a little brighter?
-  How have I tried to be goodness and kindness to others – children – to parents, to others at school?
-  What thoughts of peace, justice, and love have I brought in to dwell in my heart? What thoughts of discord, criticism, evil?
-  How has God acted in my life today? How have I accepted or resisted God’s help?

For the month of October, why not commit to Examen each evening in the light of your call to holiness?

