

The Examen

The five steps to the Examen as it appears in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola:

1 Give thanks

Spend a few moments in gratitude for the gifts and blessings of the day.

Lord, I realize that all, even myself, is a gift from you.
Today, for what things am I most grateful?

2 Ask for light

Ask God to enlighten you, showing where he has been at work and present in your day through events, people and places.

Lord, open my eyes and ears to be more honest with myself.
Today, what do I really want for myself?

3 Examine the day

Review the moments of the day, noticing what has led to *consolation* and what has led to *desolation* and my reactions to these events, people, and places. **

Lord, show me what has been happening to me and in me this day.
Today, in what ways have I experienced or ignored/rejected your love?

4 Seek forgiveness

Ask God's forgiveness for the times when you have acted, spoken or thought contrary to his grace and calling for you.

Lord, I am still learning to grow in your love.
Today, what choices have been inadequate responses to your love?
I am sorry for these choices. Help me to live according to Your calling for me.

5 Resolve to change

Decide what in your behavior or attitude you will try to improve tomorrow.

Lord, let me look with longing toward the future.
How will I let you lead me to a brighter tomorrow?

** **Consolation** is when something is deeply and genuinely good for us, good for our souls, leads us towards God and away from our selfish preoccupations.

Desolation is when something is not good for us, when we are wrapped up in ourselves, and careless of God's gifts and grace working in us, when we substitute other things in place of God.

Note that Ignatius means *spiritual* consolation/desolation. While these may be found in our thoughts and emotional responses, they are not the same as our feelings of delight and despair.

The examen might take 10 to 15 minutes to complete, but can also be done in a much shorter time depending on the circumstances.