

An Outline of the Ignatian Examen (Examination of Conscience)

***Note: This outline is based on Saint Ignatius of Loyola's presentation of the Examen in his *Spiritual Exercises* (no. 43). The acronym GRACE comes from Fr. Joseph Koterski's article "Strengthening Our Prayer Life" in the publication *Magnificat* (July 2018), but the words are slightly modified, and the descriptions are our own summary based upon Saint Ignatius' work.

Upon beginning: I acknowledge God's presence – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – with me in this time of prayer, and then I take ten to fifteen minutes to reflect on the past day.

G Step One: Gratitude. I call to mind the gifts that God's love has given me this day, trying to be specific and giving thanks to God for each of them.

R Step Two: Revelation. I ask God for wisdom and strength to make this examination a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity. I ask him to reveal Himself and His will for me.

A Step Three: Account of Actions and Attitudes. I review the past day. I examine the desires, thoughts, emotions, and attitudes that God has given me this day. I look also for those desires, thoughts, emotions, and attitudes that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both, noting any patterns or trends. I then focus on one significant experience and ask the Lord, "What do you want to say to me about this?" I listen to Him. If I have an extended period of time, I might read some Scripture and ask, "Lord what do you want to say to me through this Scripture in relation to my experience and life?"

C Step Four: Contrition. I express sorrow and ask for forgiveness from God. I receive his healing, and spend a moment imagining God holding me and just saying "I love you."

E Step Five: Effort. I look to the following day and plan specifically in one way how to live more closely in accord with God's loving will for my life.

At the end: Aware of God's presence – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – *within* me, I prayerfully conclude the Examen with an Our Father.