

The Examen

❖ Preparatory Acts:

- Set aside a time and place that is conducive to a prayerful moment.
- Spend a few moments allowing the concerns of the world to drift out of your mind as you realize that you are truly in the presence of your loving Father.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and mind in this time of prayer, and then pray acts of faith, hope and love to prepare your heart for the movements of grace. (There are copies of these prayers on the back of this sheet, or you can simply pray from your heart for these same things.)

❖ Step 1: Gratitude

- This step is about understanding how much and how concretely God loves each of us. The most essential fact of the spiritual life is that: God loves you.
- When we understand how much God loves us we can then begin to see all of the wonderful things he does for us every day, and has done for us every day of our life.
- Remember that the spiritual life is essentially a relationship of love between you and your Father in Heaven. Ingratitude or unawareness can do such tremendous damage to this relationship.
- In this step take time to reflect on the last 24 hours. Think about your day either hour by hour, or broken up into chunks, or perhaps just the highlights, and consider how God's grace and love was present to you. As you are mindful of God's grace in each moment of your day, give Him the thanks and gratitude that He deserves.

❖ Step 2: Petition

- This step is about asking God for the grace to grow closer to Him and be transformed in His grace. Without God's grace what can any of us hope to accomplish? Thus, it is essential that we ask God for light and strength to persevere, not just in the Examen, but in our pursuit of the Gospel.
- In this step ask God for the light and strength to know how best to live His Gospel and to follow through with your resolutions and conversion of heart.

❖ Step 3: Review

- This step is searching our day for the various spiritual movements that we experienced, whether they were from the Father or the evil one, and how we responded to them.
- Consider your moments of prayer. How did you experience this time of prayer affectively? Did you experience a growth of faith, hope, and love? Did your heart become full of new enthusiasm and a deep desire to follow God? What thoughts or resolutions did your prayer leave you with? Did you experience a coldness or distance from God? Did the fires of faith, hope and love grow cold? What brought either of these experiences on? If they were from God, accept them. If they were from the evil one, reject them.

❖ Step 4: Forgiveness

- This step is about deepening our understanding that God truly loves us. It is essentially relational. When we truly begin to understand just how much God loves us, then we can begin to understand that even in our brokenness, littleness, and sinfulness that God never abandons us. Growing in that love, trust, and understanding is the goal of this step.
- Looking over your day hour by hour, consider how you fell short of His love throughout the day. Consider where you gave in to despair or allowed the evil spirit to get the better of you or did not follow the clear promptings of God's grace.

