



SILENCIO

A RESOURCE OF LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATIONS, INC.

© JANUARY 2019, THIRTEENTH EDITION

EXAMEN

WRITTEN BY SAGE PAIK

The start of a new year is the time many of us think of habits and practices they would like to begin, often toward a healthier, more productive self. On the Dr. Oz show recently, a medical expert talked about the mental, emotional and physiological benefits of taking 30 minutes at the beginning and end of the day for oneself—alone and quiet. He said he likes to take that time to meditate. It seems to me that a credible person on a mainstream talk show recommending and personally vouching for that kind of self-care time has broad, popular appeal and meets the felt need of many.

The truth is that we live harried, anxiety-filled, on-the-go, technology-driven lives. That fast pace may begin early in life when parents overschedule their children. It continues into adulthood as people feel the need to remain busy to feel important. Twenty-four hours seem a few hours too short of what would be nice to have in a day, things around the house are never “done,” and the stream of emails seems unending. Too easily we wrap our sense of worth and pride in the frenzy of life instead of in the costly, steady, spacious love and grace for us of God in Christ. Still, something deep within longs for slower, longer, fuller breaths. And rest.

Our ancient Christian heritage calls to us with such an invitation. The Ignatians have given us the long-practiced way of solitary, quiet reflection called the daily examen. Through it, we take time to deliberately notice God and discern his leading in the internal thoughts and external events of our everyday life. This practice instructs us to become aware of God’s presence, review the day with gratitude, pay attention to our emotions, choose one feature of the day and pray from it while we look toward tomorrow.

I think about our common longing and need to pause and care for ourselves, our need to notice the presence and leading of God...and I wonder if all that could be the Spirit-formed product of daily examen, which is a form of worship. Worship—not of the church community,

Sunday morning sort—but the kind that is alone at the end of a full day. Worship that is putting down things that are not quite done. Worship that trusts in him that it’s ok. Worship that is washing up and sitting or lying down in bed giving our tired bodies and minds to his care again. It is well. Worship that acknowledges his goodness and love. Humble-grateful-adoring. The One who loved us while we were yet his enemies. The safety of opening all of our heart for the searching, exposing, advocating work of the Holy Spirit in us. Seeing and listening as he lovingly reminds us of moments in our day and reveals ways of repentance, obedience, and gratitude. Receiving his mercy and satisfied grace. Anticipating a more right relationship with him and our neighbor. And even if we fall asleep mid-examen, he is still able to lead us into our knowing and obeying him. His grace is sufficient for us.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

– Psalm 139:23-24

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

– Psalm 73:26

BE THOU MY VISION

A HYMN BY DALLAN FORGAIL, 6TH CENTURY

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

- Become aware of God's presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your awareness of God's promised presence.
- Review the day with gratitude. Give thanks and celebrate the gifts that you received from God and others.
- Pay attention to your emotions. List a few feelings that were present throughout the day (i.e. embarrassment, fear, elation, contentment).
- Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring one element of your day to mind. Focus specifically on that experience. Sit with it prayerfully.
- Look toward tomorrow. As you look toward tomorrow, allow God to shape a prayer within you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Looking back on the day's events, which have been most life-giving? Which have been the most life-draining?
- What are the things that led you towards God today? What are the things that led you away from God?
- When did you have the greatest sense of leaning into your true self, an identity that is firmly rooted in the love of Christ?
- When did you have a sense of leaning into your false self, ways in which we strive to find our identity apart from Christ?
- As you sit prayerfully and listen to the stirrings of the Spirit, what is God's invitation to you as you pay attention to the day's events?

Prayer of Illumination

As I lay me down to sleep, my soul asks of God, show me what you want me to see. Was there any person I may have hurt or been ungracious or ungentle toward today? Reveal the motives of my heart. Was I selfish? Was I cowardly? Was I proud? Remind me what I forgot to thank you for today. Thank you. Give me the grace to go check to see if I offended someone, to be vulnerable, to make peace, to be more quick to notice you. Make me more of who you have already made me in Christ. For the service of others and to your glory and delight. Amen.

SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION RESOURCES

The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today by Timothy M. Gallagher
The Jesuit Guide To (Almost) Everything by James Martin, SJ
Noticing God by Richard Peace



Additional spiritual formation resources are available online at www.spiritualformationstore.com.