

SAINT IGNATIUS
OF LOYOLA — THE EXAMEN

Officer Training

SAINT IGNATIUS



The Miracle of Saint Ignatius Loyola
by Peter Paul Ruben

IGNATIUS

- Dates: 1491 to 1556
- Founder of the Society of the Jesuits
- Youngest of 13 children
- Severely injured by canon-ball in siege of Pamplona.
- During long recovery read the accounts of the saints and was deeply transformed.

IGNATIUS (CONT.)

- As soon as able to walk went on pilgrimage.
- After all-night vigil exchanged clothes with beggar . . .
- Laid his sword on altar of Our Lady in Monserrat . . .
- Entered several months of solitude/
discernment.

IGNATIUS (CONT.)

- Determines to become a priest
- Enters University of Paris - diligent student
- Persuades six to follow him in forming a group dedicated to the renewal of the church through service and heroic piety.
 - This group eventually becomes the SoJ.

IGNATIUS - EXERCISES & EXAMEN

- The publication of his *Spiritual Exercises* is very important.
- Based on his experiences of coming to devout faith during months of solitude.
- The exercises are meant to facilitate deep discernment about vocation
- Part of discernment process was to make a complete examination of one's life. The daily discipline of doing this is start of the *Examen*.

IGNATIUS - EXERCISES & EXAMEN

- Ignatius offers the examination of life *before* he sets out the rest of his “exercises,” as a fruitful discipline that can be employed frequently throughout the thirty-day process.
 - *A particular examination* — focussed on a specific bad thought or bad action with the goal of eliminating it.
 - *A general examination* of one’s daily life — seeking out virtues to promote and failings to stifle.

CONSOLATION — DESOLATION

A key concept to understand before practicing
the *Examen*

IGNATIUS - CON/DESOLATION

- "Consolation, [is when] the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of its creator and Lord, and consequently can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of all things." (Anthony Mottola, "Rules For The Discernment Of Spirits," *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1964, p. 129).

IGNATIUS - CON/DESOLATION

- "Desolation," in stark contrast to "consolation," Loyola defined as the "darkness of the soul, turmoil of the mind, inclination to low and earthly things, restlessness resulting from many disturbances and temptations which lead to loss of faith, loss of hope, and loss of love. It is also desolation when a soul finds itself completely apathetic, tepid, sad, and separated as it were, from its Creator and Lord" (*Spiritual Exercises*, p. 130).

IGNATIUS - CON/DESOLATION

- Ignatius knew that God speaks to us through our deepest feelings and yearnings. He taught that by paying attention to them we could discern God's will.
- "Solace" as a noun is the alleviation of grief and/or anxiety.

IGNATIUS - CON/DESOLATION

- Consolation - derives from 'solace' and means essentially "with solace." Those feelings of consolation are feelings of peacefulness and joy which come from an encounter with God and/or our truest nature.
- Desolation - also derives from 'solace' and means "without solace." Those moments of desolation in our day are times when we, through our sin or the activity of the Spirit, are left ill at ease and disturbed by an event or person or situation.

IGNATIUS - CON/DESOLATION

Both Consolation and Desolation are important ways in which God communicates the Divine Will in our lives.

The practice of the Examen is the practice which allows us to learn from consolation and desolation.

THE EXAMEN PROCESS

This is one (good) way to practice the examen . . .

THE EXAMEN - A PROCESS

Step One — Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit in discerning God in your day.

† Begin your examen by praying something like, “God, send your Holy Spirit to me to enlighten me with understanding as I gather up the pieces of my day and seek you and your calling in them.”

THE EXAMEN - A PROCESS

Step Two — Consider the day in gratitude for what it was and what it can teach you.

† There is a great peace which belongs to those who can give thanks for each day — knowing the gift that it is. No matter the content of your day, it has been a day in which to live in God's love. As we close the day and consider it, let us give thanks to God for it.

THE EXAMEN - A PROCESS

Step Three — Search for God by reviewing the day.

† Review the events, feelings, experiences, and interactions of the day.

† Pay special attention to the times in which you experienced *consolation and desolation*. (see handout)

† Seek God in the other people you met and interacted with throughout the day. In what other person(s) was God present to you? How were their needs and their contributions meant to help you know what God wants of you?

THE EXAMEN - A PROCESS

Step Four — Consider what response is required, or what lesson God may teach you amid the “material” of life.

† What do the things you have noticed about your day suggest you *do*? In what ways could they be the tools of God meant to shape you and call you to become a fuller expression of the image of God? What do you need to omit from tomorrow’s feelings, activities, and remarks? And what might you add to your life tomorrow in order to grow in grace?

THE EXAMEN - A PROCESS

Step Five — Rest in Grace.

† Give thanks again for your successes, and accept forgiveness for your failures, and rest in God's love — knowing that tomorrow you will begin again to walk the life-long journey of faith with God's grace to aid you on your way.

THE EXAMEN OVER TIME

A magnified effect when journaled
over a period of weeks or months.

Lord, Teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not heed the wounds, to toil and not seek for rest, to labour and not seek reward, save that of knowing that I do your will. Amen.

Prayer Attributed to Saint Ignatius