



## INTRODUCTION: AN INVITATION TO BREATHE HEAVEN IN THE MIDST OF NOISE

We live at full speed. We wake up in a hurry, fill our days with screens, notifications, and responsibilities, and go to bed with a sense of exhaustion that isn't always just physical—it's existential. In the midst of this whirlwind, many people search for a moment of peace, a compass for the soul, a way to reconnect with God. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, left us a silent yet powerful spiritual treasure: the **"Ignatian Pause"** or **Daily Examen**.

This five-step exercise, which can take as little as ten minutes, is not just a method of meditation. It is a **school of discernment**, a concrete way to **see God in all things**—even in chaos, in pain, in routine. Today, more than ever, we need to recover this art of living with an awakened soul.

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## I. SPIRITUAL ROOTS: THE EXAMEN IN THE IGNATIAN TRADITION

What is the Ignatian Examen?

In his work **Spiritual Exercises**, Saint Ignatius proposes the *general examination of conscience* not merely as a review of sins, but as a privileged moment of dialogue with God. It is not a cold judgment, but a **loving conversation between the Creator and His creature**.

Saint Ignatius asked his religious to do this examen **twice a day**. For him, it was a non-negotiable tool for keeping the heart centered on God.

| *"In everything, to love and serve." — Saint Ignatius of Loyola*

### Biblical Foundation

The idea of examining one's life in the light of God is not originally Ignatian, but profoundly biblical. Saint Paul exhorts:



*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”*

*(2 Corinthians 13:5)*

And Psalm 139 cries out:

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.”*

*(Psalm 139:23)*

This type of examen is not narcissistic introspection, but **embodied prayer**: letting God look at our day with us and teach us to see as He sees.

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## II. THEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE: DISCERNING TO LOVE BETTER

### An Act of Faith and Humility

To examine your life daily is an act of faith: recognizing that God is present in your concrete story. It is also an act of humility: admitting that we need daily conversion.

In spiritual theology, the daily examen is considered a **practice of constant discernment**. It helps us identify the movements of the soul: What thoughts, emotions, or decisions brought me closer to God today? Which ones led me away from Him?

### Holiness in the Ordinary

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the universal call to holiness. But holiness is not achieved through grand gestures, but through daily choices. The examen makes us **aware of the small things**, and it is there that God sanctifies us.

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### III. A PRACTICAL IGNATIAN GUIDE: FIVE STEPS TO TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

Saint Ignatius left us a concrete structure that can be followed each night. Here it is with a pastoral, theological, and very current interpretation:

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#### 1. Give Thanks

**Why start with gratitude?** Because everything is grace. Thanksgiving shifts the center of the world away from us and returns it to God.

**How to do it:** Close your eyes and review your day. What moments, gestures, words, or people were a gift from God? No matter how small they may seem.

*"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."  
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

**Pastoral Application:** Gratitude purifies the soul from resentment and complaint. It is a spiritual vaccine against despair.

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#### 2. Ask for Light

Before examining yourself, **invoke the Holy Spirit**. This is not about seeing yourself through your own eyes, but through God's eyes. The examen is not meant to accuse you, but to enlighten you.

**How to do it:** With a brief prayer: "Lord, show me what You see. Help me look with Your tenderness."



*“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”  
(1 Corinthians 2:10)*

**Pastoral Application:** This humble plea prevents both scrupulosity and superficiality. It places us before God as children, not as judges.

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### 3. Review the Day

This is the heart of the exercise. It's not just reviewing the hours as if looking at an agenda. It means **pausing at the heart of your actions**.

**How to do it:** Ask yourself:

- In what moments was I faithful to the Gospel?
- When did I love, listen, forgive, give of myself?
- When was I selfish, indifferent, or prideful?
- What thoughts dominated my mind?
- Which “spirit” did I follow today: God’s or the world’s?

**Pastoral Application:** This step is pedagogical: it helps to recognize patterns, dominant emotions, recurring temptations. It's the best training for discernment.

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### 4. Ask for Forgiveness

Not from neurotic guilt, but from contrite love. The daily examen leads you to recognize your sin and to **experience mercy**.

**How to do it:** Name to God what disappointed you about yourself today. Ask His forgiveness with simplicity. If you fell, say: “Lord, lift me up.”

*“A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*



| *(Psalm 51:17)*

**Pastoral Application:** This act prepares the heart for sacramental Confession. It teaches humility and frees you from spiritual perfectionism.

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## 5. Make a Resolution

Looking is not enough. True love **translates into purpose**. This final step is an offering: “Lord, tomorrow I want to live like this...”

**How to do it:** Choose a concrete gesture for improvement: a virtue to practice, a temptation to resist, an attitude to cultivate.

**Pastoral Application:** The resolution connects the daily examen with real conversion. Little by little, this step transforms your whole life.

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## IV. HOW TO INTEGRATE THE IGNATIAN PAUSE INTO MODERN LIFE

You don’t need a retreat in the countryside or a silent chapel. Just a quiet place and a willing heart. Here are some concrete suggestions:

- **Choose a fixed time of day:** ideally before bedtime.
  - **Keep a spiritual journal:** write down lights and resolutions.
  - **Do it in community or as a couple:** sharing the examen can be very edifying.
  - **Combine it with night prayer:** add Psalm 4 or the Magnificat.
  - **Don’t worry if you miss a day:** return peacefully the next day.
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## V. TESTIMONIES OF CHANGED LIVES

Many saints—even modern ones—have practiced the Ignatian examen. Saint John Paul II did it daily. Pope Francis, a Jesuit, has recommended it as a tool for soul formation.

Many laypeople say that since they began this practice, they have discovered **how God acts even in the ordinary**, and have learned to live with more awareness, gratitude, and coherence.

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## CONCLUSION: A MORE ILLUMINATED LIFE AND A FREER SOUL

The Ignatian Pause is more than a spiritual technique. It is a **way of life**, a concrete method of making each day an offering and every moment an opportunity to love.

If you take ten minutes each night to look at your life with God, you will see your heart become freer, your conscience clearer, and your faith more alive. This is not about controlling everything, but about **letting God teach you to live with eyes wide open**.

Try it tonight. Give your soul that moment. And tomorrow will be different.

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### Where to start?

Tonight. Turn off your phone, close your eyes, and say: “Lord, I want to see my day with You...”