

ENDING THE DAY IN REFLECTION AND PRAYER

ADAPTED FROM IMAGO DEI CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Ancient Christians have practiced the Awareness Examen in which, every evening, they pause to examine the effects the day has had on their hearts in light of God's calling. You can use this simple prayer as a means of growing in attentiveness to your day.

This short prayer exercise is to help increase your sensitivity to the Spirit working in your life and to provide you with the awareness needed to cooperate and respond to God's presence. If you use this daily, you should find it helpful in noticing spiritual movements and choosing to respond wisely to them. The Awareness Examen is meant as a time of reflection, usually at the end of the day, and can be done in 30 seconds or 30 minutes. It involves five stages:

1. Thanksgiving

Begin by looking over the day and asking to see where you need to be thankful. Do not choose what you think you should be thankful for, but rather look over the day to see what emerges, what you notice, even slightly. Allow gratitude to take hold of you and express this to the Holy Spirit who at this moment beholds you.

2. Ask For Light

This is a prayer for enlightenment from God. We dispose ourselves for the awareness that we hope will come more directly from God. We have a hard time believing that our own thoughts can actually be from the Spirit, but Jesus tells us in Matt 10:20, "it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." Likewise, Paul tells us in Rom. 8 that "we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Therefore, ask the Spirit to show you what God wants you to pray.

3. Finding God In All Things

Again look over the events of the day. This time ask the Spirit to show you where God's presence has been in your life, either in you or in others, and in the events of your day:

- What events in your day have had an impact upon you?
- Where are the signs of the Spirit, i.e. of light?
- Where are the signs of discouragement of spirit, i.e. of darkness?
- What interior events were significant for you?
- Notice what stands out even slightly, such as joy, pain, turmoil, increase of love, anger, harmony, anxiety, freedom, isolation, a sense of the presence or absence of God
- Where do you sense you were being drawn by God's Spirit?
- How did you respond to these events or experiences?

4. Respond to God In Dialogue

Is there any one area you are being nudged to focus your attention on, to pray more seriously over, to take action on? This is where your energy needs focus instead of on the many other things you think are important. Discuss this with Jesus.

Express what needs to be expressed:

... praise ... sorrow ... gratitude ... desire for change ...desire for peace ...
intercession ...

5. Help and Guidance For Tomorrow

Ask God for your needs for tomorrow. For example, you may need to pray to overcome something, to be more sensitive to God's activity in your environment, to celebrate in some way, to trust God, to make some decisions to act against some destructive forces in your life, to desire a particular grace from God.