**Daily Examen:**

A great way to pray is to ponder God’s presence and holy movements in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius of Loyola encouraged the daily Examen prayer as a way to do just that. The Examen involves prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and to discern his direction, His will, for us. The steps are as follows.

1. Become aware of God’s presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day’s gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius’s great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow’s challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what’s coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God’s guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Our Father.

Forgive me my sins, O Lord, forgive me my sins;  
the sins of my youth, the sins of my age, the sins of my soul,  
the sins of my body; my idle sins, my serious voluntary sins;  
the sins I know, the sins I do not know; the sins I have concealed  
for so long, and which are now hidden from my memory.  
  
I am truly sorry for every sin, mortal and venial,  
for all the sins of my childhood up to the present hour.  
I know my sins have wounded your Sacred Heart,  
  
O my Savior, let me be freed from the bonds of evil   
through your most bitter Passion, my Redeemer. Amen.