

## The Big Lenten Prayer Tent

Peter Watkins, a spiritual director in St. Paul, shared the Examen.

*Peter Watkins, Spiritual Director, St. Clement's, St. Paul*

### The Examen Prayer

The examen is as profound as it is simple. It is a wonderful prayer of recollection. It comes from the Ignatian tradition that presupposes "God in all things." It is best done at night as the day winds down, but it can be done anytime. Here are the steps to take to get started. Once you become familiar with the basic flow please then find ways to make the prayer your own.

1. Start your examen prayer by briefly giving thanks, remembering that everything is a gift from God. Then ask God for grace and wisdom during this prayer time.
2. Place your hand on your heart. Look back on your entire day in sequence from beginning to end. Be aware of the moment in the day for which you feel most grateful, when you were best able to give and receive life and love. Ask yourself what was said and done that made this moment so special. Breathe in God's Spirit and see if you can smile again as you relive that moment.
3. Take time to look back on the moments of the day for which you feel least grateful, where you were least able to give life and love. Ask yourself what was said and done that made it difficult. Take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are. Ask for what you need and the grace to grow. (If you feel there is more to be done here you might pray the [serenity prayer](#), or imagine that you are holding that incident as you would hold a crying baby.)
4. Return then to your positive memory, breathe out any tension until every part of your body is at peace.
5. The next morning awaken remembering your positive memory and saying thank you. (By remembering your examen the next morning, over time you will have more restorative sleep and you will be able to begin your day moving into God's will of giving and receiving life and love.)

You can adapt the examen to be prayed as a family, with friends, and with children before bedtime.

*If you want to explore more, take a look at the book, [Sleeping with Bread](#) by Matt Linn, S.J. There are also a number of apps that can walk you through the prayer. My favorite is [Reimagining the Examen](#) by Mark Thibideaux, S.J.*

Credit and gratitude to Matt Linn, S.J. from whom I was taught this prayer, and especially for his class notes which served as the basis of this description that I received as a student at Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality.

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