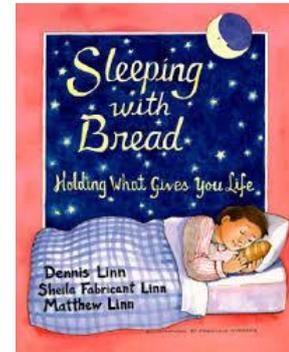


Be Joyful

Examen of Consciousness

Introduction: *One of the ways God speaks to us is through our deepest feelings and yearnings, what Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) called “consolation” and “desolation.” Consolations are those experiences that fill us with joy, life, energy and peace. Desolations are those that drain us and feel like death. Consolations connect us with ourselves, others and God. Desolations disconnect us. The questions below are one simple way of discovering the day’s consolation and desolation, that is, the interior movements of God through which He is speaking and leading.*



"From Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life" by Dennis, Sheila, and Matthew Linn

The “examen” is traditionally conducted at the close of a day as a way of attending to the movement of God's Spirit in one's everyday experience. The following questions may help you notice these movements. Read over the list and reflect on and respond to a question each night.

- For what am I most grateful? Least grateful?
- When did I give and receive the most love? The least love?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? Least sense of belonging?
- When was I most free? Least free?
- When was I most creative? Least creative?
- When did I feel most connected? Least connected?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?
 - Consider (without judgement) what both the positive and negative responses might be showing you about yourself. Take it to God in prayer.
 - End with prayer for grace to be more aware of God's presence and leadings.

The Examen can be a useful tool to enhance all aspects of your daily life: relationships, work, spirituality, vocation, etc. The Examen is also useful when you need to make a life-altering decision or are at a crossroads in your life.

Prayer Stations

You might find the prayer stations entitled, “Be Joyful” and “New Life in the Desert” particularly helpful at this point. But again, use what feels right for you at this point.

Gratitude Exercise

This is a very simple but immensely fruitful exercise. Take your journal or a piece of paper and starting with the people closest to you, write down everything you are grateful for. You might start with your parents, for example, giving you life, food, support, an education, sympathy on bad days, celebrating your good days etc. Move on to siblings, partners, children, friends.

Then think of your senses and all you receive through them. What are you most grateful for? What gives you the most joy?

Nature – all that you receive from trees, flowers, birds, water, mountains, streams...

Your gifts, your hobbies, places you have visited, books that have changed your life, music that always uplifts you when you listen to it...

God. The person(s) who nurtured your faith, particular moment in your journey, people who love and support you in your church community now.

Acts of kindness, generosity, patience etc shown to you or to others. I hope you get the idea! Go where your mind takes you and you will be amazed at how long your list gets and the feelings of gratitude and joy it awakens in you.

