

# INTERVARSITY

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## *Suffering and Spiritual Formation—The Daily Examen*

The Daily Examination of Conscious is a spiritual discipline practiced by Christians for centuries. It is based upon the assumption that God is present and speaking to us throughout the day. For example:

### **Psalm 139:1-6**

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

<sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.

<sup>5</sup>You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Method: Four Steps** (adapted from Dennis Hamm, SJ)

1. **Become aware of God's presence.** Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. Take three deep breaths and ask for God's grace – filled light.

2. **Review the day in thanksgiving.** Note what the past 24 hours contained—gifts of existence, work, relationships, food, challenges. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God. So use whatever cues help you to walk through the day from the moment of awakening—even the dreams you recall upon awakening. Walk through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, task to task, person to person, thanking the Lord for gifts you encounter.

3. **Review the feelings/responses that emerge in the replay of the day.** Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface, the whole range: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion, disgust, gratitude, pride, rage, doubt, confidence, admiration, shyness—whatever was there.

4. **Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.** That is, choose the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important was going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling—praise, petition, contrition, cry for help or healing, whatever. To round off the examen, say the Lord's Prayer.

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