

Examen for Listening Sessions

One way to experience contemplative prayer is simply a practice of listening and receiving from God. It is an opportunity to take a long, loving look at the real of daily life.

The Examen is an ancient contemplative prayer, engaging our memory and imagination. It invites us to see our lived experiences, as God sees them. It offers us God's companionship as we return to particular moments with contemplative eyes, deepening our kinship with God. This practice, done over time, enhances our ability to discern God's calling in our lives by giving us greater clarity about when we are noticing God's presence with us and when it is obscured or hidden. Eventually, we can more readily notice these experiences of felt presence, known as consolation in the discernment tradition, and experiences of felt absence, known as desolation.*

Preparation:

Setting aside 30 minutes in a reflective space with a journal available.

Contemplative Prayer

Dedicate this time to being with God, asking for the grace to see with God's eyes.

Ask God to go with you in your memory over interactions you have had with our Diocese—to look back slowly at discrete moments and notice them together with God. Experiences of our Dioceses include committees, worship services, programs, governance, staff interactions, formation, etc.

For the first third of your time, give your attention to the places in your interaction with our Diocese where you felt inspiration, invigoration, connection, support, encouragement, etc. Allow your first response to be directed to God in gratitude: "God, thank you." As you notice each experience, linger with God to savor it together.

Renew your desire for the grace to see with God's eyes and be accompanied by God in your re-viewing. For the second third of your time, give your attention to the places in your interaction with our Diocese where you felt *constriction, burden, disconnection, resentment, resignation*, etc. Allow your first response to be directed to God in request: "God, help me. God, help us." If it is available, explore what it is like to be attuned to God now about this experience where you may not have been aware of God during the initial experience of constriction, burden, resentment, confusion.

Finally, spend time journaling what you have noticed. Devote these awarenesses as an offering to God.

*Ignatius of Loyola created the Examen of Consciousness during the formation of the Society of Jesus. Walter Burghardt, SJ, describes contemplation as a long, loving, look at the real.