

Prayer of Examen (reviewing year)

Begin by finding a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Then sit comfortably, with good posture and both feet on the floor. Allow yourself to relax and close your eyes if you like.

1. Recall you are in the presence of God

As you sit in silence, focus on God's deep and abiding love for you. We are always in the presence of God. Try to become aware of God's presence in an attentive way. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall the past year with love and to let you look on all you see with love.

-- pause --

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

-- pause --

2. Recall your year with gratitude

Now remember the small pleasures of the past year; things like spending time with friends and family, a good conversation, a good trip. These are all gifts from God. As you remember these small gifts from God, take a moment to reflect on the gifts that you gave the past year, whether to God or to others. How did you bring your strengths, your sense of humor, your abilities, your encouragement, your patience to others? When you have finished, pause briefly and thank God for these things.

-- pause --

3. Ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit

In a moment you will begin to retrace the moments of the past year. Before you do, ask the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your mind. The Spirit will lead and guide you into the truth and mystery of your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit for the capacity to recall your year with clarity and an understanding of your limitations.

-- pause --

4. Review your year

Now go back to the beginning of last year and allow it to play like a short movie in your mind. Pay attention to details that pop up. Start with the spring season, then the summer, then the fall. In each of those seasons, what were your feelings? What motivated you to respond to certain situations in the way that you did? The purpose of this is to draw out the positive and the negative aspects of your year.

-- pause --

As you are reviewing your year, ask the question, "Where did I fail?" Was there a moment when you lived out of anger or bitterness or fear? Were there things that you avoided? Don't allow yourself to dwell on these things or seek to resolve them. Simply allow yourself to identify them and move on.

-- pause --

Next, ask the question, "When did I love?" Were there moments in which you made the choice to live out of love. Perhaps it was caring for someone who was hurting or spending intentional time with your family or participating in community. Remember the ways that you chose to love this past year.

-- pause --

Next, search for any patterns or habits during the course of the year. Do you chat for a few minutes with a certain neighbor or co-worker? Are you always watching TV at a certain time or staying late at work? Are you online or engaged with social media before you sleep? As you detect these patterns, what emotions do you sense coming to the surface for each habit? Do these habits help you face each day with love? Do they hinder you from facing each day with love?

-- pause --

5. Reconcile and Resolve

Finally, picture yourself seated next to Jesus, talking as you would with a friend. Maybe there was something in the past year that you don't feel good about. Tell Jesus about this and express your disappointment and ask him to be with you when you face that moment again. Allow yourself to feel the sorrow in your heart as you share this, but also remember and give thanks for Christ's continual restoration of your heart. Remember all of the good moments of the past year and thank Jesus for His presence with you in those moments.

-- pause --

6. End with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, As we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.