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Remembered largely for his manual on prayer, *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola understood prayer as a way of being, rather than as an act of doing. While his *Exercises* put forward various methods of prayer and also draw on prayer methods and ideas that he gathered from others, it was not the doing that he saw as critical but rather his relationship with God that drove everything he did. Thus, for Ignatius, God was the ground of his life, and prayer the way of life that kept him grounded. Prayer then is never just a task to be performed but rather, a whole way of life; or as the Jesuits are fond of saying, a *way of proceeding*.

But it is not always easy to know how to proceed in this way of prayer. Are we only praying if our lips are moving and we're talking to God? Are we only praying when we stand silently listening before God? Does it only count as prayer if we are consciously aware that we're doing it? And if that's the case, how is it that one could ever do as the scriptures say and *pray without ceasing*? For Ignatius, prayer is simply the living out of one's life in relationship with God who created each one of us *from love, of love [and] for love* ("Principle & Foundation," trans. Bergan and Schwan). He believed that if one were to live in conscious recognition of the gifts that this loving God bestows continually, one would eventually be drawn to respond in kind. In other words, gratitude for the gifts of God would lead to greater goodness and love on the part of the receiver; a goodness and love that such a person would quite naturally live out and pass on in their own daily life. Simply put, Love begets love. And it was a personal relationship with this God of love that Ignatius sought to help others develop and deepen. One way he suggests easily staying in communication with God is through the daily practice of what is known as the *Examen* prayer. Perhaps you are familiar with this practice that consists of spending a few moments reviewing the events of the day, noting when and how the Spirit has been moving in yourself. There are many variations of the Examen Prayer but one that can be especially useful is referred to as a *Thanksgiving Examen* since it specifically focuses on graces one has received throughout the day, rather than on one's shortcomings.

Below are five steps of the *Thanksgiving Examen*. It can be practiced at any time but seems especially appropriate for the end of each day. It can also be adapted to however much time one has. Many people find that even a brief few minutes spent with God in this way refreshes their spirit.

1. Give thanks in general to God our Lord for the benefits received in your life, in others, and in the world today.
2. Ask for grace to recognize those particular things that happened during this day, both to you and to others, for which you should be personally grateful.
3. Take account of your day from the hour you arose to the present time, hour by hour, or period by period: first your good thoughts, ideas and intentions; then your good words spoken and heard; and then good acts, your actions and those of others, small or large, that positively touched your life or the life of someone else. Perhaps record these in your journal.
4. Praise and thank God for the opportunities you had to make a difference in the world today and ask God to inspire you to recognize more and more such opportunities in the future.
5. Thank God for all God has done for you, and ask yourself: "What can I envision doing that would lead me to be even more deeply grateful?" Close your prayer time with an "Our Father." (Adapted from Louis Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*).