



Congregational Connections

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REFLECTING ON 2023; LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

With a new year beginning, we are inclined to make New Year's Resolutions. Yet, how often do we review the year that was, in order to learn how we can improve ourselves for the coming year? Better yet, how often do we review the year in order to learn where God was and what God was up to in the midst of it all?

The leaders of the Examen(ed) Church program through Marquette University are inviting everyone to make a "Yearly Examen". This practice is simply an extension of the "Daily Examen" that is central to Ignatian spirituality and The Examen(ed) Church. The Daily Examen is a practice where an individual takes time during the day to look for signs of God's presence in the day and to pay attention to one's emotions for clues to moments where we are drawn toward or away from Christ. While 2023 is still fresh in your mind, consider the following prompts to help guide your prayerful reflection of 2023. If a full year is overwhelming, try just one aspect of life over the course of the past year.

1. **Pray for light.** Ask God to bring clarity and understanding as you review your year.
2. **Review the year in thanksgiving.** Give thanks to God for all the many blessings received over the past year. Go through each month, dwelling upon the good and thanking God for it.
3. **Review the feelings of each month.** Review your year again, month-by-month, and recognize your feelings, thoughts, and movements of the heart. There will be certain people and events that strike a chord (for good or for ill).
4. **Consider common threads and attend to them.** Ask God to direct you to pay attention to any common threads, themes, new insights, or awareness. Consider what rises to the surface. Pray about it as you attend to the source of the feeling.
5. **Look toward the future.** Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Anticipate God's presence in the days to come, and plan to live in accordance with God's guidance.

Hope you find this spiritual exercise useful this month!

Peace,
Pastor Scott