

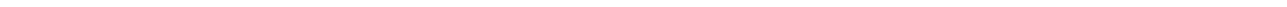


RECONCILING GOD, CREATION AND HUMANITY

An Ignatian Examen

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Reconciling God, Creation, and Humanity is a reflection tool to heed Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'* to care for creation and to reconcile our relationship with God, creation and one another as expressed in the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.

With this in mind, this Ecological Examen asks you to reflect on your personal relationship with creation, to acknowledge and amend your ways and to promote ecological justice by standing in solidarity with those most impacted by environmental harm.

WHO CAN USE THIS EXAMEN?

This Ecological Examen is a tool for prayer, reflection and action as individuals in their home, parish, school, university or community deepen our call to care for creation and the most vulnerable. Please join the Ignatian Family in seeking a conversion of heart to embrace ecological justice and Pope Francis' call to care for our common home.

Summary

1. I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made. Where did I feel God's presence in creation today?

2. I ask for the grace to see creation as God does – in all its splendor and suffering. Do I see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth and the poor?

3. I ask for the grace to look closely to see how my life choices impact creation and the poor and vulnerable. What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation? How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead stand in solidarity with creation and the poor?

4. I ask for the grace of conversion towards ecological justice and reconciliation. Where have I fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters? How do I ask for a conversion of heart?

5. I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity, and to stand in solidarity through my actions. How can I repair my relationship with creation and make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation?

6. I offer a closing prayer for the earth and the vulnerable in our society.



Begin the Examen by placing yourself or your group in a posture that allows you to be open to the ways the Spirit is working in you.

There are six steps in the Examen. Go at a pace that works for you: pause at sections in the Examen that you would like to reflect more on.

If you are in a group, consider discussing what emerged in your personal Examen once you are done with the reflection.



Ignatian spirituality invites us to recognize that all that we are, the person we are now and the person we are becoming, the possessions we have and the earth we inhabit, is all a gift from a loving Creator.

I begin my Examen by centering myself in the midst of God who is the God of unconditional love and infinite creativity. I imagine how this God of love created the beauty of the universe.

“The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.”¹ I see that God is part of every facet of creation, operating in the world in the smallest organism to the greatest mountain range.

I give thanks to my God who created all the Earth, all the creatures upon the Earth, the fishes of the sea, the birds that soar through the skies, the water that gives us life and all humanity.

I give thanks to a God who molded me in my mother’s womb and who crafts me into the person who I am today. I thank God for my life and for all that God has provided me to sustain this very life. I recognize all I am and all Creation that surrounds me is a gift from God.²





(Header): The view from Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House in Sedalia, CO. Image Credit: Stephen Redden

(Top Right): Alice New Holy and her granddaughter, members of the Lakota Tribe. Image Credit: Don Doll, S.J.

(Bottom Right): A participant in the JRS food security project in Giteranyi, Burundi. Image Credit: Jesuit Refugee Service

Ignatius invites us to look down upon the world from the eyes of God the Trinity. God looks at the Earth and sees the great diversity of the world, the goodness of all Creation and the different people who live in the world today. ³

I ask for the grace to look at the world as God does – to see the world in its infinite goodness, diversity and interconnectedness.



“The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf,

I see the close relationship between all creatures and our common home and how we are dependent on one another for our mutual well-being. Like God, I rejoice in how the earth and the creatures and people who inhabit it are all wonderfully made.

But like God, I also hear “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”⁴ I hear how “this sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.”⁵

I see signs of our sins reflected in the “symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”⁶ I see how indigenous peoples have been displaced from their lands and seen their water contaminated due to an economic system that prioritizes profit over people and the common good. I recognize how a “throwaway culture” discards not only things but people as “leftovers,” and how it is the poor and



(Above): REPAM is a Latin American Catholic church transnational network created to respond to the challenges facing the people of the Amazon and their natural environment.

Image Credit: Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM)

(Above): Farmers from the northern Honduran village of Nueva Esperanza. Residents here chose to fight back when a global mining corporation attempted to usurp their land. Hundreds of human rights abuses and murders have been linked to such land disputes in Honduras.

Image Credit: Jeremy Zipple, S.J.

vulnerable who suffer most from climate change.

I see how poor people and persons of color disproportionately live in neighborhoods near industries that produce contamination and waste, whether in urban cities, rural areas or in precious natural biomes such as the Amazon.

I see how poverty, inequality and globalization contribute to “social exclusion [and] an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services.”⁷ I am pained by the increasing negative impacts of globalization on the earth and humanity.

As Pope Francis exclaims, we cannot ignore the cries of Creation, the poor and the earth who “is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.”⁸

I ask for the grace to look closely at my own life and the decisions I have made. I ask myself how do I care for the gift of creation and the resources of the Earth, which are meant for the benefit of all, including our brothers and sisters around the world and future generations? How

do my choices impact the environment and people in my community, nation and around the world, particularly the poor and vulnerable?

Choose one or two of these questions to reflect upon each time you do this prayer:

How present am I to the world around me? How do I show my love for God through my respect for creation and my neighbor? How does my environment shape who I deem to be my neighbor or part of my community? Who is left out?

How can I move away from a throwaway culture? How can I demonstrate care for creation and solidarity with my brothers and sisters and the most vulnerable?

Where are the most polluted areas of my community and in the world? Who lives there?

How do I use water throughout my daily life? How am I a responsible steward of this gift? How do my consumption patterns and demand for energy impact the availability of clean water for communities in my country and around the world? Who has access to clean water, a basic human right, and who does not?

“Am I aware that my use of power here disempowers another environment somewhere else?”⁹ How can I be more conscious of the impacts of our demand for energy, be it increased carbon emissions from coal, oil and gas, increased deforestation or the potential contamination of a community’s access to clean water. Could I live with less energy?

Do I recognize that eating is a moral act and that “how I treat my food is how I treat my home?” Do I take more than I can eat?”¹⁰ Do I waste a lot of food when many around the world are hungry? Am I conscious of where my food is grown and under what conditions? Am I aware of the energy and water that went into the production of my food, and the impact on the environment?

In my desire for reconciliation with creation, I ask God for forgiveness and the grace of ecological conversion.

I acknowledge the ways in which I personally have chosen convenience, selfishness, and greed over ecological and social justice.

I also acknowledge the ways structures, patterns, and cultures of sin impact my life, the lives of people on the margins and the earth. Through my recognition of where I have fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters, and through God's mercy, I pray for a conversion of heart to amend my ways. I seek through my prayer and actions to reconcile myself with God, creation and humanity.

I ask for the grace to become someone who chooses to see the world through the eyes of the marginalized and acts to contribute to a more socially and ecologically just society.

Seeing the joys and suffering of the Earth and its creatures and persons across the globe, I also see "signs of God's work, of the great ministry of reconciliation God has begun in Christ, fulfilled in the Kingdom of justice, peace and the integrity of creation." ¹¹



(Above): Image Credit: Sergi Cámara / Ethiopia

God calls us as caretakers of the earth not simply to take the earth's resources for our own benefit, but to use the earth's resources to praise, reverence, and serve God.

By working for environmental justice and reconciliation with creation, we reverence the God of love and co-labor with God towards Christ's own mission of reconciliation and love.

We "are called to help heal a broken world," to embrace a culture of solidarity and encounter. This means embracing a new sustainable path forward and a "new way of producing and consuming [that] puts God's creation at the center."¹²

I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity. With the entire Ignatian Family, I take up this challenge by identifying personal concrete action steps to live more sustainably.

In what ways can I pray at home and with others for reconciliation with creation and for a conversion of heart to embrace ecological justice?

In what ways will I seek to live more simply (in my home and community) and to make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation?¹³

In what ways through my actions can I stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable who are disproportionately affected by the environmental crisis?

In what ways will I advocate for environmental policies that care for creation and the most vulnerable?





(Header): Students prepare fields for planting through Creighton's Schlegel Center for Service and Justice.

(Above): Catholics joined the People's Climate March in 2017. Image Credit: Robert Christian, Millennial Journal

(Above): Food justice projects bring local, sustainably grown foods to underserved communities. Image Credit: Erin Yeager

Prayer

In concluding our Examen, we give thanks to God for the gift of creation. We ask for God's help and guidance so we may care for creation and the most vulnerable among us, strengthened in our common pursuit for ecological justice.

"A Prayer for Our Earth"

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

(Laudato Si', n. 246)

About the Creators of the Examen:

Office of Justice and Ecology of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

The mission of the Office of Justice and Ecology (OJE) is to help the president and provincials of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States reflect the Jesuits' work for reconciliation on issues such as immigration and economic, criminal, juvenile and environmental justice.

The OJE is the voice of the provincials to the Church, governments, nongovernmental agencies and others, advocating on behalf of the poor and other marginalized communities and encouraging others to do the same. The OJE serves as the principal liaison with the international Society of Jesus, particularly with the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology at the Jesuit Curia in Rome.

Equally as important, the OJE helps the Jesuit Conference fulfill the mandate of General Congregation 36 for developing Jesuit, Ignatian and other networks by collaborating and cooperating with various groups and encouraging them to live a faith that does justice.

Ignatian Solidarity Network

The Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN), is a lay-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that networks, educates, and forms advocates for social justice animated by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the witness of the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador and their companions. ISN has over 90 partner institutions across the U.S. and Canada, high schools, universities, parishes, and social ministries within the Jesuit network and larger Catholic Church.

Citations:

Above: Image Credit: Sergi Cámara / Entreculturas

Footnotes:

¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 233.

² Based on the Contemplation to Attain Divine Love from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, 234-236.

³ Contemporary paraphrase of the Incarnation Meditation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, 106.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 49.

⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 46.

⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

^{9, 10} Greg Kennedy, S.J., [Ecological Examen](#)

¹¹ General Congregation 36, Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice, 3.

¹² General Congregation 36, Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice, 29.

¹³ General Congregation 36, Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice, 30.