

## Bishop's Advent Message 2016

*"Therefore, brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the coming of the Lord. Consider the farmer who waits patiently for the coming of rain in the fall and spring, looking forward to the precious fruit of the earth. You also must wait patiently, strengthening your resolve, because the coming of the Lord is near. Don't complain about each other, brothers and sisters, so that you won't be judged. Look! The judge is standing at the door! Brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of patient resolve and steadfastness." The Letter of James 5:7-10*

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

The season of Advent focuses on the fulfillment of the Commonwealth of God. The breaking in of the Commonwealth of Justice, Peace and Love began with the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Advent looks to both the beginning of the story and to the cosmic future fulfillment of the Commonwealth. As the followers of God in Jesus Christ, we are the Body of Christ living into that Commonwealth in the here and now. We are called to live the truth of Love right now.

How can we best live in the Commonwealth of God? St. Ignatius of Loyola (died 1556) developed a simple form of prayer by which a person can review each day in a way that will help one grow in self-understanding and be free to discern God's will. This practice is often called the "Daily Examen." Many people choose to practice this prayerful review of their day before going to bed at night (or first thing in the morning) by following the steps:

*Before starting, take a moment to slow down and ask God for help.*

1. **Gratitude:** Recall the blessings of the day and thank God.
2. **Review:** Recall the events of the day and notice where you felt God's presence and where you resisted opportunities to grow in love.
3. **Sorrow:** Recall anything for which you are sorry.
4. **Forgiveness:** Ask for God's forgiveness and/or healing if needed.
5. **Grace:** Ask God for the grace you need for the next day or for your life in general.

Jim Manney offers a good introduction to this prayer practice in his little book *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer: Discovering the Power of St. Ignatius Loyola's Examen* (Loyola Press, 2011). There are variations on this theme, but these steps provide the general framework. For my personal prayer, I use an app on my iPad based on some variations of this method found in *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* by Mark E. Thibodeaux (Loyola Press, 2015). Information about the app can be found at <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/23542/reimagining-examen-app>.

Our lives as the followers of Christ Jesus include the preparation to respond to the world, as it should be (the Commonwealth of God). Our self-examination allows us to look honestly at ourselves and to prepare to live each day as the beloved of God. I hope the practice of

Daily Examen can provide an aid to self-awareness and help us prepare to respond to those around us on behalf of our loving God.

*Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Your servant in Christ Jesus,  
+Bob