

magnificence, O Lord, be so illustriously displayed in this our dungeon; how resplendently shall it blaze forth in the palace of thy glory!...If this prison afford so many comforts, oh! What enjoyments are prepared for thy servants in their true and everlasting country!" (Augustine, Soliloquies, 21). Sincere genuine piety will suggest to you good thoughts on many other occasions during the day.

At the End of the Day

When you have finished your daily activities, you are not to consider your day at an end as you have not completed your *Evening Exercise*.

Never neglect your evening devotions, as too many do who lie down to rest at night, like the beast of the field without thinking of their Creator. Do not imitate them. Before you retire to rest, say your *Night Prayers*, and endeavor to say them well. Heads of families should assemble their families for the purpose of saying these prayers together. Night Prayers should consist of the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Confiteor*, and the *Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity*; along with some other prayers according to your devotion, or according to the forms which you find in your prayer books.

Your daily examination of conscience should never be omitted, and should be a part of your evening devotions. It may be done in this manner: First call to mind the benefits you have received from God, and thank him for them, begging him to continue sending them. Then, examine what sins you committed during the day and make a

fervent *Act of Contrition*, resolving to avoid them in the future, and beg God's grace for this purpose. Endeavor, every night to put yourself into the disposition you wish to be at the moment of your death.

Never conclude your Evening Exercise without recommending yourself to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the Angels and Saints. Pray that your Guardian Angel will protect you during the night. When undressing yourself, remember that God and his holy Angels see you. When you get into bed say: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I lie down to rest. Lord, I offer my sleep to you; preserve me this night from all evils of soul and body." Thus, even your sleep will be sanctified.

Begin and spend the next day according to this same plan, and so on, as long as you live, and your life will be a life of virtue and will entitle you hereafter to the possession of your God in a happy eternity.

Besides the daily Examination of Conscience every night on the conduct of your day, you would do well to examine yourself again when you prepare for Confession or Holy Communion. Review your conduct since your last confession, and make certain to always be in a state of grace in order to receive Holy Communion at least weekly.

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The Catholic's Daily Spiritual Exercise

The first thing you should do in the morning is to make the sign of the cross, and offer your heart, mind, and soul to God; thus you will consecrate to him the first fruits of the day. In all our works, a good beginning is of great importance, as it will draw down the grace and blessing of heaven upon what remains to be done. If we begin our day well, it is most probable that it will end well.

When the proper time for rising arrives, rise immediately, without yielding to slothful indulgence. You should dress modestly, bearing in mind that you are in the presence of God and his Angels. Try to think positive thoughts about the goodness of God, who has granted you this day, which may be your last, in order to labor in it for the salvation of your soul and the souls of others.

You should then kneel down to pray. Nothing other than a real necessity should keep you from beginning your day in prayer. Bow down your whole soul and body to adore your Sovereign Lord and creator, and offer yourself to his love in divine service. Put yourself in his presence and give thanks to him for his infinite goodness to you and to all his creatures. You should ardently desire to join all his Angels and Saints in blessing and praising him.

From the depths of your heart, beg his forgiveness for all your sins and be willing to die rather than to offend God any more. All this may be done in the following form:

Behold me, O Lord, prostrate in your holy presence, in order to bless and praise your infinite goodness, and to beg for your mercy. Give me the grace to pray as I should.

Bowing down my whole soul, mind, and body, I adore you as my sovereign Lord and Creator, as my first beginning and last end, on whom I depend for everything that I have or can hope for.

With sincere gratitude, I acknowledge the many and great blessings which I have received from your bounty, and I thank you for them. Please continue to grant me these blessings.

I acknowledge, with heart-felt sorrow, my past ingratitude for my many grievous sins committed against you, and implore your forgiveness, resolved, with the help of your grace, never more to offend you.

I offer to you all my thoughts, words, and actions of this day and of my entire life and beg your blessing on them. I give myself wholly to your love and service. From this day forward I will live only for you. My sole intention, during the remainder of my life, shall be to please you by complying in all things with your holy will. Knowing that I owe a heavy debt of punishment for my past sins, I desire to make full satisfaction to your justice while I am in this world. Therefore, by all the devotions and good works which I shall perform this day, I intend to gain all the Indulgences attached to them, and with this in mind, I

offer them to you for the required intentions.

Then in these dispositions and intentions Say the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Apostles Creed*, and *Confiteor*, and make *Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition*. To these you may add any other prayer which may be suitable to your time and devotion. Do not neglect to pray for all your family, friends, and enemies, for the living and the dead, and beg God's mercy, grace, and salvation for all. You should never conclude your morning prayers without begging the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of your Guardian Angel, your Patron Saint, and the whole court of heaven.

Set apart a proper time in the morning for your *Meditation* and be regular and diligent in this important exercise. Never let a day pass without reading some portion of a spiritual book, either in the morning or during some other part of the day.

It is a very devout practice to *hear Mass* also in the morning, whenever time and opportunity permit. Hearing Mass is a powerful means of grace, and drawing down the divine blessings upon yourself and your loved ones.

During the Day

You should *go through the day* by doing all your actions *for God*, with the view to please him. You should know how to act when you receive any blessing from God and also when he sends you crosses to bear. You should be ever ready to plead with him for divine assistance and protection when you are tempted to sin, and for mercy and

forgiveness whenever you have been so unfortunate as to offend him.

Besides these, there are many other occasions which will naturally direct your thoughts to God. For example, when you check your watch to see the time, it should remind you how fast time goes by, and reflect that you are that much closer to death, judgment and eternity. Resolve to spend what time remains to you in loving service to God, and pray that God will enable you to do so: "O my God, teach me to love you in time and eternity." When you see fire, think of the fires of hell, exclaiming with the Prophet Isaiah: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" When you see a person dying or dead, or see a funeral procession, or pass a graveyard, say to yourself, "My turn may be next." Resolve to immediately prepare for your last hour and to keep yourself always ready, praying in the words of the Church, "From sudden and unprovided death, deliver me, O Lord" (Litany of the Saints). When you wash yourself, think of the state of your soul; of how frequently it has been defiled with sin, and make a fervent Act of Contrition, saying with the penitent David: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! (Ps 51:2). Thunder and lightning will remind you of the awful Majesty of God, and also the day of your judgment, and will suggest to you a variety of reflections and among the rest, this question, "Am I prepared to stand before the divine Tribunal?" When you behold the beauties of nature, direct your thoughts to heaven, saying with Saint Augustine, "If thy