

Examen on Allyship

During this Ignatian Heritage Month we are reflecting on the concept of allyship.

What does it mean to be an ally?

Allyship is the active, ongoing practice of using your privilege and position to support and amplify marginalized groups and advocate for systemic change, not a one-time event or identity. It involves acknowledging your own position and biases, doing the necessary "inner work" and research, listening to the experiences of others, taking responsibility for mistakes, and using your influence to dismantle oppressive systems and fight for collective liberation and equity.

All of us have the opportunity to be allies to a community that is different from ours.

As we begin our examen today, we recognize God's Presence. I invite you to go to that place, in your mind, where you feel connected to God. Perhaps it is through a prayer, a song, a scripture reading, a poem, a memory, a place - real or imagined. But put yourself in that space where you most feel connected to and can recognize God. Perhaps it is in nature or in Church.

Take a moment to feel that connection.

As you feel this connection, consider how God is an ally for you and how you are an ally for God.

Relax into this reflection.

Moving to the second part of the examen, we consider the concept of gratitude. As you hear the word gratitude what things start to surface for you? What are you grateful for today, in the here and now?

Now consider other things you are grateful for, perhaps from your past.

Now consider things that are consistent in your life for which you are grateful.

Finally, express gratitude for the allies in your life.

As we move to the Third part of the examen, we ask for assistance.

We can say a prayer similar to this, "Spirit, help me to review my day and my life, with clarity, without judgement and honestly. Help me to see what I perhaps cannot see. Help me to know that which I perhaps do not know.

Guide me and show me the way as I examine my day.

Now we take a few moments to examine our day or even our week. We examen in the lens of allyship.

As I examine my life through this lens I consider the ways I have and have not been attuned to these areas.

An examen is not simply a listing of what I didn't do, but rather a balanced, constructive reviewing of my actions.

This is an opportunity to look at my strengths and weaknesses in the following areas:

- How have I been an ally this week?

- Have I done any inner reflection to recognize my own biases, unearned privilege, and how I perpetuate oppressive systems?
- Have I done any research to understand the history and current realities of the struggles faced by marginalized groups?
- Do I listen more than I speak, and use my platform to amplify the voices and work of those from marginalized communities?
- Have I actively worked to change oppressive systems by challenging injustice and inequity in my personal and professional life?
- Am I open to receiving criticism and taking responsibility for mistakes, using them as opportunities to learn and grow?

As we start to bring our examen to a close, if needed, we ask God's forgiveness for any actions that may not have been aligned with my own integrity and God's design for me.

I also envision ways I can lean more into the life God is calling me to live.

We now close our examen with a prayer.

"God of justice, we pray for the healing of divisions that separate us. Melt down the powers of exploitation and privilege that govern our societies. Grant your holy Spirit to move in the hearts of all people, so that suspicions disappear, hatreds cease, and we may live together in justice and peace. May the righteous flourish and the poor not be forgotten. Amen."