



Examen Sunday

Living Connection

The God revealed by Jesus as co-suffering love offers a living connection—the Fountainhead of all being is loving, caring, forgiving, responsive, and personal. But God is also the human image whose affliction is united with and gives meaning to ours.

Bradley Jersak

It's been a deeply meaningful practice for me at the end of each year; one I undertake before ever turning toward a word or image or anything for what's to come next. Year after year, this practice has allowed me to experience God's tenderness and kindness as the calendar pages turn, reframing my experiences not by the world's standards of success or failure, but by God's unfailing mercy toward me.

I want that mercy and tenderness for you.

Tara Owens

Begin:

Take deep breaths. Let yourself settle and relax. Release any need to perform or feeling of expectation. Know that whatever happens in this time, it is enough. Pray a simple prayer that acknowledges God's presence with you and around you.

Receive:

Ask God for the ability to move beyond your perspective of yourself and your year. Out beyond your accomplishments and your failings is a spacious place where God wants to take you. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal what God would have you focus on, whether it is the sweep of the whole year, or one or two specific experiences within it.

Ask:

If you feel led, use a few questions for guidance: In the past year, where or for what do I find myself the most thankful? An event? An experience I had? The love I received from others? Courageous action that I took? Spend some time asking for God's light to reveal *Godself* to me, and for God to reveal *myself* to me. Where have I felt deep joy, even if fleetingly? What has been unsettling or upsetting? What has been a struggle or challenge? Where did I experience stopping and resting?

Review:

Allow the past year to play before you like a movie. Let God control the timing and scenes. What would the Spirit like to show you? Release your agendas, and notice what Christ wants you to pay attention to.

Pray:

Using the questions or images as the ground of your prayer, come to God in conversation or silence. This may be a particular event or it may be a pattern you have noticed emerging. Spend time with this before God. You may want to journal, or create, or do something else that is a natural ground for communication with God. If you chose a word for 2023, pray that to God. Does the Spirit have a word for 2023 in retrospect that may be different than the word you chose moving forward?

Imagine:

If it feels right, ask God to give you a holy imagining for 2024. Are there blessings or challenges ahead? Relationships, habits, learnings that you are being invited into, or out of? Imagine what it might be like to experience those things with God, rather than on your own. Notice what Christ has to say to you about these things. Are there graces God is inviting you to ask for even now?

Share:

**What prayer is God birthing in you for Artisan?
What single word or image might symbolize
our asking for God's eyes and heart for 2024?**

Rest:

After you are done, spend some time simply resting in silence with God. Allow your heart to be held by the One who loves you most. Release all you can into God's care, and enjoy God's delight in you, the Beloved.