MANY PARTS MINISTRIES

A THANKSGIVING EXAMEN

Take five minutes to look back on your year with God, on your own or around your holiday table.

> *"In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."*
> **1 THESSALONIANS 5:18**

WHAT AN EXAMEN IS

The examen is a prayer St. Ignatius of Loyola taught about 500 years ago. It's simple. You look back over a stretch of time with God and notice where He was at work. A lot of people pray it at the end of the day. This one looks back over your whole year.

You don't need a journal, a candle, or a silent house. If the only place you can be alone on Thanksgiving is the garage, the garage is perfect. Let yourself be thankful in the midst of imperfections.

And if this year was hard, you are welcome here. You don't have to feel thankful right now to pray this. Just start wherever you are.

HOW TO PRAY IT

If you want to do it on your own: Take the five steps below one at a time, about a minute each. Go longer anywhere you want to.

If you want to do it around the table: Skip to **At the Table** at the bottom. It's one question everyone can answer, kids included.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for this year. Thank You for the people You gave me and for every way You were at work, especially the ways I missed in the moment.

Jesus, I surrender every part of this year that was harder, slower, more frustrating, or more painful than I wanted to You at the foot of Your Cross. Thank You for Your sacrifice for me.

Holy Spirit, thank You for animating me every day. Teach me how to use the gifts You have given me for the people right in front of me.

Amen.

AT THE TABLE

Read the verse at the top out loud. Then go around the table and have each person finish this sentence:

"This year, I'm thankful God gave me _____."

If everyone is up for a second round, try this one:

"Someone at this table who helped me this year is _____, when they _____."

Close in prayer together thanking God for each other and His many blessings.

1 Ask the Holy Spirit to Help You Look Back over the Year

The Holy Spirit was with you for all of it, and He remembers it better than you do. Ask Him to bring to mind what He wants you to see.

Come, Holy Spirit. Show me this year the way You saw it.

2 Thank God for What He Gave You

Walk back through the year: winter, spring, summer, fall. Who and what did God give you? What showed up that you didn't earn or plan?

Thank Him for specific things. A person. A meal. A phone call that came at the right time. It's okay if it's small things or things that seem silly. Every little thing matters to God.

3 Notice Where God Used You

Think of a time this year when someone was better off because you were there. Maybe you made dinner, gave a ride, listened, or said the thing they needed to hear.

That is often the Holy Spirit at work through the gifts He gave you. Thank Him for letting you be part of His work in the world.

4 Bring Him the Hard Parts

Some of this year hurt. Some of it you would do differently. You don't have to skip over that, and acknowledging that doesn't undercut your gratitude.

St. Paul says to give thanks *in* all circumstances. He doesn't say you have to be thankful *for* all of them. Tell God about the hard parts the way you would tell a friend. Ask His forgiveness where you need it. Then give those parts to Him.

5 Look Toward the Week Ahead

Ask the Holy Spirit two things:

- Who is one person I can thank for their impact in my life this week?
- Who is one person who needs to receive what You have given me to give away?

You don't need an elaborate plan. Just listen to God in the moment and throughout your week.