

**Matthew 5:1-16 (NIV)**

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.

He said:

3

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

5

*Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

6

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

7

*Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

8

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

9

*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.*

10

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

13 *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

14 *“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

## Adapted from *Examen Your Politics* by Nish Weiseth

Spiritual formation is the process by which we are shaped by the power of the Holy Spirit into the image of Jesus for the sake of others. But none of the discipleship of my youth ever mentioned that we are made in the image of Jesus for the sake of others. Not for us, but for our neighbours, for our communities, for the sake of doing the work of Jesus here on *this* Earth, and *this* time, to see the Kingdom of God break through the world just a little bit more tomorrow than it did today.

We are made more into the image of Jesus so that others might flourish, so that the last would be first, so that the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted would be blessed.

We are called to be made more into the image of Jesus for their sake, so that they may be blessed. It is a formation that has others in the centre. When we are formed in the image of Jesus for the sake of others, only then will we have a politics that is formed by our faith, rather than the other way around.

Politics is the single largest systemic tool we have at our disposal with which we can love our neighbour. Simply put, politics for the Christian should be institutional neighborliness.

Started by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the Prayer of Examen is an ancient practice and opportunity to reflect on our lives, observe the movement and presence of God, and more clearly discern His direction and guidance. It is a form of prayer that can rightly align your hearts with the heart of Christ, giving us the eyes to see what He sees, the love He has for others, and our role in illuminating the Kingdom of God.

What if we implemented this practice in our political engagement? After all, everything can be formative – for good and for bad. How are we being formed by our politics? More important, how are we letting God inform our political engagement?

Let's take the basic principles and outline of Ignatius's Prayer of Examen and place it within the context of our politics.

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Begin with a moment of quiet or silence.

Close your eyes and make yourself as comfortable as you're able.

Take a deep breath.

Allow yourself to awaken to the presence of God.



Thank God for today and the ability to make it through another day.  
Express your gratitude for any joys, victories, or encouragement you received.  
Thank God for the people in your life and in your wider church community - be specific.  
Give God thanks for the ability and opportunity to engage in complicated conversations.



As you begin to review your engagement on this topic,  
ask God for clarity about both your own self and about God.  
Ask God to show you what you need to know.



Look back at your own ideology and experience - whether big (maybe you or someone close to you has been harmed in a conversation previously) or small (you read a piece of news online). Ask yourself any or all of the following questions.

- What has troubled you about your own engagement?
- Where did you find joy in your political engagement?
- How did you love and serve others through your political actions today?
- Where did you feel challenged, or where did you feel opposition?
- When you participated in similar conversations, what did you do well? What needs improvement?
- Have there been places where your conversations have caused pain? How might you adjust and/or make amends if necessary?
- Be aware of your emotions--how do you think God sees you? How do you think God sees your politics?
- Where did you notice the presence and movement of God?
- How did you experience God's love?



After recalling your actions, reviewing your engagement in politics, and reflecting on the movement of God, what is your response to God's revelations to you?



- What do you hope for in your own engagement in these conversations?
- What do you desire from God?
- What do you hope for the church?
- How do you want to be formed in this area moving forward?

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