



THE HIGH PLAINS PREACHER

Welcome to the High Plains Preacher, stories about the Bible, high wind, fast horses, lack of moisture and other elements of life in the Texas Panhandle

Looking Back

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

It's good advice to look ahead. But sometimes it's also good to look back. Just ask St. Ignatius of Loyola, one of the greatest spiritual athletes in the history of the Catholic Church.

Spiritual fitness is similar to physical fitness. Some folks pay good money to get in physical shape. They join fitness clubs and invest time and revenue in personal trainers who put them through exercises designed help them achieve peak performance. If you are looking for a personal spiritual trainer, St. Ignatius is your man.

What you give a celebrity athlete to know the secret to achieving peak performance when it comes to spiritual fitness? What would you give if you get through every crisis with serenity and confidence? What would give to watch the depressing news on the TV and not lose hope?

According to the expert trainer, St. Ignatius, the Examination of Conscience is THE single most important spiritual exercise that a Christian can do to lead a life that is intentional, confident and full of faith.

Most Catholics think the Examination of Conscience is nothing more than a mental checklist of all things you've done wrong before stepping into the Confessional. But that's not the type of performance review that St. Ignatius recommends.

First of all, he will expect you to undergo this exercise twice a day, not just before going to confession.

Second of all, St. Ignatius' version of the Examination of Conscience is not about the *bad* things you've done, but the *good* things that *God* has done—and is continuing to do—in the concrete circumstances of your day-to-day life.

The exercise goes like this: "Lord, as I glance back over this morning, or this afternoon, I now see that you were present in this particular person, in this particular place, in this emotion that I felt, in this endeavor that I undertook."

That's Step One: The recognition of Christ. Step Two is similar: Your response to Christ: "Did I ignore Christ in this particular circumstance? Or did I respond with trust and joy to his presence?"

This simple exercise pays tremendous dividends, reminding you that every hour of every day, you rub shoulders with God.

Yes, looking ahead is good advice. But looking back and seeing Christ at your side is even better.