**2018 Orientation Community Examen**

**Greg Ouellette**

I am grateful for the opportunity to share an Examen prayer/reflection with you all. If you would like to have your journal out, I certainly invite you to have that to write down things as they are bubbling up for you. At the same time, if it is distracting or might pull you away from the prayer/reflection to have a journal out, it is certainly fine to go without one, too.

As we begin this Examen, I would like to take a few moments to slow down.

Let us recall an insight from Eddie Cantor, who encourages us to

“**Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast - you also miss the sense of where you are going and why**.”

I think this slowing down is at least part of what we do with Examens.

So, I invite you to find a comfortable position, maybe that’s in a chair, feet flat on the floor, hands folded; Maybe it’s legs crossed, palms facing up Maybe that’s lying on the ground; Maybe you want to close your eyes, maybe you want to center your attention on your hands, maybe find a point in the room to center your attention. Whatever is a comfortable contemplative position for you, I ask you to find that. Now, I invite you to take a few centering breaths, again taking whatever kinds of breaths that are comfortable for you; maybe that’s a few deep breaths, deeply expanding the lungs, and fully expelling any stagnant air from your lungs; maybe that’s a few regular breaths; I would not necessarily recommend short breaths, but again, taking a few breaths that are comfortable for you

As folks have mentioned, there are many different ways to do an Examen. For this Examen, I would like to take some time to sit with the value of community, specifically around connection and relationships, and I would like to invite a presence of compassionate, tender love to join us.

Firstly, let’s spend a few brief moments in gratitude, being grateful for one or two gifts or blessings, big and/or small that you have received today. To whom or to what do you want to say thank you today? Are you grateful for a meal, a conversation, an insight, a gift tangible or intangible, or something else?

Considering gratitude, author and addiction and recovery specialist, Melody Beattie says, “**Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.**”

Again, briefly what is something or two things from today to be grateful for?

Now, inviting a lens of compassionate, tender love, let us review the events of today briefly, yet more fully. In your imagination, relive each significant moment of the day, lingering at the important moments, and passing quickly through the less relevant ones.

Again, there are many different ways to do an Examen, and for this one, I invite you to embrace your recollecting imagination; I invite you now to walk through your day on your own; unlike the other Examens, I will not provide prompts, but instead take a minute or two to do that on your own now.

Holding this recollection of the day, when was a moment during which you felt disconnection or dissonance with another person or people? What was that time like? Was it over a meal? During a session? Maybe in a small group? Maybe one to one? Maybe in the large group? Was it with someone present here? A Community Mate? A Speaker? A Staff member? Some with whom you had previously experienced some connection?

Did something stir in you today to a recall a memory with someone outside of this space? What has it been like unplugging, turning off cell phones and computers? What has it been like being apart from family members, old friends, a partner? Has saying goodbye to things or people been a part of this disconnection?

Now holding one moment disconnection or dissonance, during this moment, was I feeling grumpy? Tired? Fearful? Angry? Loathsome? Disgusted? Guilty? Not my best self? Was there someone you could have reached out to or offered connection or resonance to, but you missed that moment? Did this moment, and these feelings with it, lead to missing out on or limiting connection in some way? Was there loss?

Do you need to seek advice? Forgiveness? Healing? Reconciliation? Support? An apology?

Is there a **discomfort worth leaning into here**?

Amidst this interaction, where is the presence or absence of this compassionate, tender love

Now, let us to shift gears a little bit to recall a moment, during which you felt connection or resonance with another person or people.

What was that time like?

This time, was it over a meal? During a session? Maybe in a small group? Maybe one to one? Maybe in the large group? Was it with someone present here? A Community Mate? A Speaker? A Staff member? Some with whom you had previously experienced some disconnection?

Was it with someone outside of this space?

Were you feeling inspired? Grateful? Warmth? Friendliness? Affirmation? Supported? Seen? Silly? Joyful? Humorous? Was there someone who reached out to me or offered connection or resonance to me?

Thich Nhat Hanh, reminds us, “**Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy**.”

When were you smiling today? When was **joy sparked** today?

Is there someone you would like to thank or otherwise affirm for this interaction?

Let us savor this interaction again with that presence of compassionate, tender love.

Now, zooming out a little bit, and lightly holding these two moments, let’s consider a brief reflection from the Daily Good Team. They share:

“**Knowing that there will be sadness, there will be challenges, that things aren't always smooth sailing, do you find yourself saying 'yes' to life, to joy, to connection? When we accept the uncomfortable experiences, we realize that joy and sadness can coexist, and by choosing our focus, we change the direction of our lives. The foundation of 'yes' to all that occurs does not mean we relinquish our strength and boundaries. Rather, it builds the confidence within us to have an unwavering resolve when 'no' is needed. We readily say 'no' to all that doesn't serve us when we are our paths serving the world. This is where we shift from being driven by negative motivations to being drawn by the positive source of soul awareness within**.”

Again, holding two moments, these moments of disconnection and connection, acknowledging that each day is full of moments of disconnection and moments of connection, maybe some days, seemingly more of one than the other, and looking to tomorrow, what specifically can you do regarding these relationships?

I now invite you to begin to wrap-up this space. Let us give thanks for the gift of this time to reflect and savor the past day.

As you are ready, I invite you to slowly bring your attention back to your breath

And then to this space and room here. Again, I invite you to wrap-up, maybe say goodbye or see you later to this reflection or prayer period. If you have closed your eyes, slowly open them.

Thank you.