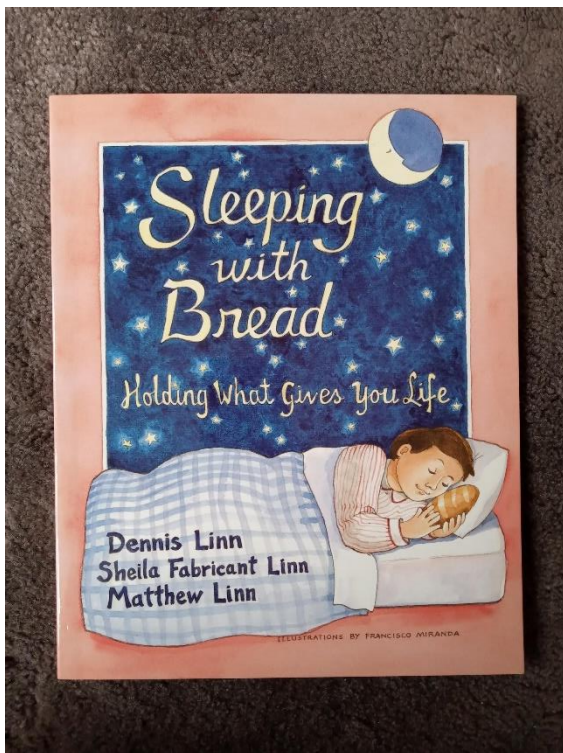


Reflection 27th May 2021

The Examen



I found this interesting little book a few weeks ago.

The authors are: a Jesuit priest, an ex-Jesuit priest and the woman that the ex-Jesuit priest is now married to!

Their ministry consists of travelling together to other, mostly South American countries, from their home in the States. They give retreats and write and speak about healing.

In their introduction to this book, they write:

"During the bombing raids of World War 2, thousands of children were

orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves once again homeless and without food. Nothing seemed to reassure them. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, 'Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow'".

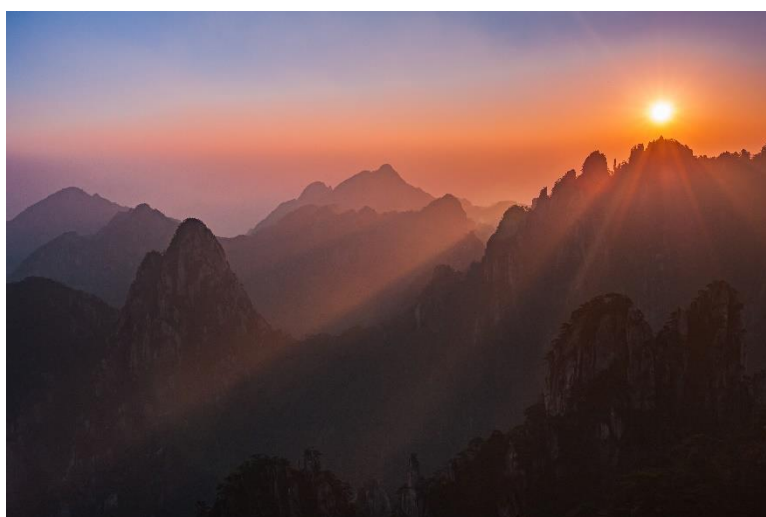
Each evening or at some other time in the day, we can get in touch with what we are grateful for from the day and give thanks. Then, in the same way, we can reflect on what we are not so grateful for, name it, feel it and acknowledge that God was with us in it. In this way, we acknowledge pain and take in love: then fall asleep/continue with the day with a grateful heart. Whatever we sleep on enters our unconscious. For example, I have often been thinking about the way to start a project or deal with a tricky situation or how to introduce a sermon immediately before falling asleep and I notice that sometimes I wake with an idea of how to go forward. This is because our unconscious continues to work when we switch off from thinking about the thing we need help with. If we end our reflection feeling grateful, we begin to experience more gratitude generally in our lives.

If we take some time to journal our moments of gratitude and lack of gratitude over a period of time, we will begin to see how God is directing our lives. He wants us to feel progressively more alive and we can begin to see a pattern to the positive thoughts and feelings we are experiencing. The moments where we are not feeling so positive will also begin to give us clues about what we need to change about our lives and relationships.

For St Ignatius of Loyola (Founder of the Jesuits) , this exercise which is called The Examen, changed him from a wild, selfish soldier to a pilgrim walking barefoot to Jerusalem as he reflected on God's purposes for his life. He realized that God speaks through our deepest feelings and yearnings as we share them in a time set aside regularly.

Alternative questions we might ask ourselves during the Examen:

When today did I have the greatest sense of belonging: to myself, others and God?



When did I have the least sense of belonging?

When did I give and receive the most love today?

When did I give and receive the least love today?

What was today's high point?

What was today's low point?

The Examen Process:

Find a private space and maybe light a candle. Ask God to bring to mind the moment for which you are most grateful today (or since the previous Examen).

Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so special. Breathe in the gratitude you felt and receive life again from that moment.



Ask God to bring to mind the moment you are least grateful for. Be with the moment without trying to change it or fix it. Take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are.

Give thanks for **all** you have experienced and received.