

Examining our Lives in the Light of Mary

“**Examine me**, Professor.” (Student’s words to Professor Khaled Anatolios, Spring 2018)

“The **unexamined life** is not worth living.” (Socrates)

“Self-education is an imperative for our time. One does not need much knowledge of the world to realize that our time, with all its discoveries, cannot remove our inner emptiness. . . .Yes, on with the exploration and subjection of our inner world through dedicated self-education.” (Father Joseph Kentenich)

“Hail Mary, for the sake of your purity, keep me pure in body and soul. Open wide to me your heart and the heart of your Son. Implore for me a **deep self-knowledge** and the grace of perseverance and faithfulness until death. Grant me souls and keep all else for yourself.” (Father Joseph Kentenich)

“Dear little Mother, let me recognize my faults more clearly. I know I am a poor sinner, but show me my weaknesses so that I can put my hands to their roots. Mother, lead me!” (Joseph Engling, *Spiritual Diary*, Sunday, June 2, 1918)

1. The “Examination of Conscience” before sacramental Confession in Light of the Ten Commandments, Seven Deadly Sins, Works of Mercy, P.E.
2. The “Examen” Prayer: “The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and to discern his direction for us” (Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ.). Father Kentenich emphasized that the child of God reads in the “book” of his or her life.
 - A. Remember the events of the day in Mary’s motherly presence: What happened? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall key moments when God was calling to you, speaking to you, through persons and events. Pray with Mary for clarity of understanding: “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:10); “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk. 1:38).
 - B. Review the day with thanksgiving: What specific gifts, great and small, did God give me? When and how did I smile back at God? What gifts was I able to give in return to God as thank-offerings, contributions to the Capital of Grace? “My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk 1:46-47)
 - C. Review the day with childlike contrition. Pay attention to your emotions. When did my conscience reproach me with the awareness that I had not behaved as I should, when I fell short in responding to God’s call? Have I caused anyone sorrow? Do I owe anyone an apology or “extra love” tomorrow to make up for what I was lacking today?
 - D. Pause to savor some memory of the day (a scene, a word, a realization) by lingering in thought over it for a minute or two. Allow a prayer (petition, thanksgiving, contrition, praise, surrender) to rise up from the heart out of that experience.
 - E. Look forward to the next day, asking God to be with you, to strengthen you, to use you, to keep you from fear, to fill you with the gifts and graces you’ll need for that day’s challenges as you can foresee them.
3. The “Particular Examen”: “Regular prayerful examination of one’s conscience by concentrating on some **particular** moral failing to be overcome or virtue to be exercised. Its focus is on such **external manifestations of the fault or virtue** as can be remembered for periodic inventory. Particular examens are changed weekly, monthly, or otherwise to ensure maximum attention” (Dan Burke). The P.E. can be controlled in writing. The well-chosen P.E. has a ripple effect,

affecting and exposing other dimensions of one's life and striving and leading to a deeper self-knowledge.

Some examples:

- A. I will not use the belonging of another person without first asking permission.
 - B. I will not complain about physical discomfort caused by changes in the weather.
 - C. I will make the sign of the cross when I pray before a meal in the public dining hall.
 - D. I will kiss the medal of our Blessed Mother to increase the tenderness of my love for her.
 - E. I will do at least one deed of kindness for another person. (Boy Scout knot)
 - F. I will not say "please" in the cafeteria line without also saying "thank you."
 - G. I will not watch / read the daily news for more than 15 minutes at night.
4. The "Particular Examen" in Schoenstatt in the Light of the Personal Ideal
- A. Is coherent with refining and perfecting the most basic drive or tendency in one's personality: either to please / surrender / assist OR to lead and conquer; draws on something strong and deep within the personality.
 - B. Focusses on realizing the inspiring ideal, the great "love of your life," rather than just on overcoming the particular fault or developing a single virtue
 - C. Is "relational": "I sanctify myself for others."
 - D. Is timely and motivated (fits to present need and circumstances; liturgical season; spiritual streams): How can I best show my love for God NOW, at this hour, in accord with my Ideal?
5. Joseph Engling (January 5, 1898—October 4, 1918) and the P.E.
- A. The Personal Ideal in Relation to the P.E.

"If we look into the life of Joseph Engling, we discover: He frequently renewed the resolution [P.E.] to read something about the Blessed Mother every day. And as he took in the image of the Blessed Mother, he experienced a Marian Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came upon him and filled him with a thrilling love for the Blessed Mother. Thus we understand that he liked to call himself *Mancipatus Mariae* [Mary's very own servant]". (J.K., 1952)

"When Joseph Engling called himself *mancipatus Mariae*, he could do so because he had received a tender Marian love. But he also acquired this love through constant reading, in order to taste the glories, the preciousness of the Blessed Mother." (J.K., 1952)

"*Mancipatus*—do you know what the word means? You must look into the former empires. There were still many slaves and they were often branded with the symbol of their master, either on the forehead or on the arm. They were then called *mancipium*. These were persons who were completely surrendered to their masters." (J.K., 1952)

Omnibus omnia. "All things to all people!" "For though I am free from all men, I made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. . . .To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that I might by all possible means save some." (Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22)

"Joseph Engling embodies in a rare manner the personality and community-type toward which we strive, and for which we want to give a home in our circles and make a common possession of the wider public for the sake of saving the endangered Christian social order." (J.K., October 24, 1947)

“If only we could succeed in being open for the values of others! This was the ideal of Joseph Engling: He never wanted to play-act the Carthusian! It was always one of his most beautiful social virtues to be entertaining.”

B. Examples of the P.E. in the Life of Joseph Engling

“Your last penance, the little prayer, ‘Mother Thrice Admirable,’ made an impression on me again as a penance. At Hoffman’s suggestion I said it more often, at times thoughtlessly, but often consciously, and it has given me courage. Now that you suggest it, I say it several times a day. I want to practice the same in the P.E. . .It seems to be good for me because it brings me closer to my little Mother and it inspires me.” (Joseph Engling, Letter to Father Kentenich, June 2, 1918)¹

3/7, 1918 I do not want to pass up opportunities for the apostolate.

3/13, 1918 I want to join in all permissible fun, in order to overcome melancholy.

3/18, 1918 I want to pay attention to small apostolic opportunities.

3/25, 1918 Five times daily I want to openly say my opinion, also in small matters. . . .Reason: to foster self-confidence and to fight fear of others.

3/29, 1918 I want to openly acknowledge that I went to evening services and speak up when somebody has wrong ideas about religion, morality, and the like. There will probably be an opportunity four times daily.

4/1, 1918 In conversations I want to pay attention to independence of thought.

4/4, 1918 In the morning and afternoon, three times each, I want to imagine that the little Mother is standing right next to me and watches my thoughts, actions, and conduct with great interest

Why is it that I have made so little progress lately? Probably because I pray too little, in spite of having much time. Also, my melancholy has reared its head again. I want to and must become a saint. (Joseph Engling, *Spiritual Diary*, Thursday, March 21, 1918)

In this place another serious fault is emerging, the opposite of my former deeds of kindness. I shirk duties as much as possible and let others do the work where I would have volunteered formerly. I want to fight against it now and use it as my P.E. (Joseph Engling, Letter to father Kentenich, January 27, 1918)

P.E. 1/28, 1918 I do not want to shirk my duty and let others do the work.

2/2, 1918 Three times a day I want to voluntarily do jobs which have to be done by us in general.

2/21, 1918 I will not withdraw from any conversation.

2/27, 1918 In those cases where I could otherwise stand or work silently next to a comrade, I want to strike up a conversation.

C. Significance of Joseph Engling

Joseph Engling stands at the beginning of our Schoenstatt history, as it were, like a gigantic divine blueprint, from which God took his bearing in directing and forming the family from then on and for all times. (Father Kentenich, undated)

[Joseph Engling], the saint of the explicitly Marian piety sees his special mission in taking care that the Blessed Mother, the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, can fulfill her mission for the renovation of the world from her shrines. We joyfully make his motto our own: *Omnibus omnia Mariae specialiter mancipatus!* (May 10, 1968)

¹ six times a day, ten times a day, according to different entries in his journal.