

Homily 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026

‘Love is having the humility and courage to say sorry.’

The film, *Love Story*, was released by Paramount Pictures on December 16, 1970. It was a major critical and commercial success and was nominated for seven Academy Awards. The film's theme song, "(Where Do I Begin?) Love Story", was nominated for two Grammys. *Love Story* proved a pop culture sensation of the 1970s and is considered one of the most romantic movies ever made by the American Film Institute. Despite these prestigious awards, I believe, the film had one major flaw and that is the story line, ‘Love is never having to say sorry!’

Sorrow and repentance of our sins are major requirements of a healthy Christian conscience. Peter in today's Gospel messes up big time. St Matthew continues to describe the Caesarea Philippi incident. No sooner does Peter proclaim Jesus as The Christ, The Anointed One, The Messiah (and is lauded by Jesus for his profession of faith) than the old Peter shows its ‘ugly side’ and he refuses to accept Jesus’ prophecy that he will suffer and die. I’m sure after the reprimand, ‘Get behind me Satan’, Peter eventually apologised and repented for his selfish outburst. He certainly repented and apologised for his later threefold denial of The Christ when Jesus later asks him three times, ‘Simon Peter, do you love me?’ His three declarations of love of Jesus were tantamount to a heartfelt apology and a repentant Peter!

It can be more difficult to say ‘sorry’ than to forgive someone who hurts you deeply. It takes humility and courage to acknowledge our faults and sins. It is not easy to go to God and a fellow human being and candidly admit our sin and ask pardon. The Prophet Jeremiah in today's First Reading states, ‘Lord, you have seduced me and I have let myself be seduced.’ He then goes on to implicitly repent and apologise for his complaining to Yahweh, ‘I have become a laughing-stock all the day;....everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’ For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.’

One way of embracing the message in today's Gospel to ‘take up the cross daily’ is by a regular examining our conscience before retiring. Not only is this an act of great humility but can also be extremely psychologically cathartic, clearing our mind and subconscious of harmful negative regrets and guilt. This healthy habit is difficult to adopt but it gives us the opportunity to reflect on our daily lives, say sorry and repent for our failings and reinforce the truth that we are basically ‘good’ and made in God's ‘image and likeness’. Never saying sorry can have the opposite effect of clogging up our mind and subconscious with unresolved harmful negative emotions.

Doesn't St Paul reinforce the case for this examen* in today's Second Reading? Paul writes ‘Do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’

How stunningly beautiful is that!

*The **Jesuit Examen** is a short, prayerful review of the day developed from the spirituality of **St. Ignatius of Loyola**. Its major benefit is that it trains you to notice how God is present and active in ordinary life, rather than treating prayer as something separate from the rest of the day.

Major benefits

1. Greater awareness of God

- The Examen helps you recognise God's presence in particular events, conversations, emotions, and decisions.
- Over time, you become more attentive to what Ignatian spirituality calls finding God in all things.

2. Gratitude

- The traditional Examen begins by giving thanks for the day.
- This shifts attention from what went wrong toward recognising gifts, relationships, opportunities, and moments of grace.

3. Better self-awareness

- You notice recurring emotional and behavioural patterns: What gives me life? What drains me? When am I anxious, resentful, generous, peaceful, or joyful?
- This can make the Examen useful for both spiritual and personal discernment.

4. Improved decision-making

- Jesuit spirituality places considerable importance on paying attention to one's interior movements—what draws you toward love, freedom, faith, and generosity versus what pulls you toward fear, selfishness, or discouragement.
- Repeated reflection can help you make decisions with greater clarity rather than simply reacting impulsively.

5. Recognition of sin without excessive self-condemnation

- The Examen asks you to acknowledge where you failed or acted contrary to your values.
- But it places this within gratitude, God's mercy, and a desire for growth. The objective is **conversion rather than guilt for guilt's sake**.

6. Greater emotional and spiritual discernment

- Ignatius encourages attention to consolation and desolation—broadly, movements toward or away from God, hope, love, and inner freedom.

- Keeping track of these movements can reveal patterns that are difficult to see in the moment.

7. **More intentional living**

- Instead of letting days blur together, you deliberately ask: What happened today, and what did it mean?
- This can help align your daily behaviour with your deeper commitments.

8. **A stronger sense of God's personal guidance**

- For a practicing Christian, the Examen can cultivate the sense that faith isn't merely about doctrines or Sunday worship but about **God's involvement in concrete, everyday circumstances**.

The deeper benefit

Perhaps the most distinctive benefit is that the Examen turns **ordinary experience into material for prayer and discernment**. You aren't merely asking, "Was I good or bad today?" You're learning to ask:

Where was God present today? What was happening within me? What am I being invited toward?

A common five-step version is:

Presence → Gratitude → Review → Repentance → Renewal

Practised for 10–15 minutes a day, it can become less like an examination you have to perform and more like a daily conversation with God about the life you're actually living.