

SAINTS IN THE FAMILY

A DAILY EXAMEN FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS

1. Beginning Prayer
2. Thanksgiving
3. Pray for a "Spirit of truth."
4. Review
5. Forgiveness & Renewal

YOUNGER CHILDREN

Very young children: Highs and Lows.

Children ages 5-9:

1. Beginning Prayer
2. What happened today?
3. How was God present, and how did we respond?
4. Pray the day

Daily Examen for Children and Teens

Sources: www.pbgrace.com and www.youth2change.com

Further Reading: [The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today](#) by Fr. Timothy Gallagher

A Daily Examen (or an Examen of Consciousness) is a prayerful method of "checking in" on how well we are living out our Christian faith on a daily basis. Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola more than four hundred years ago, the Examen invites us to reflect on how God has been present in our day, how we have responded to that presence, and how we might grow in holiness. Note that the Examen is different from an Examination of Conscience, the practice of reviewing the health of your spiritual life before receiving the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Older Children and Teens

Try the traditional form of the Examen during Family Prayer with older children and teens, setting aside ten to fifteen minutes to do it well. What follows is a simple outline; you can find more detailed versions using the resources below.

Consider lighting a candle or playing quiet music to set a prayerful atmosphere. Briefly describe each step, allow several minutes for each one.

1. Beginning Prayer. Take a few moments to quiet down, to recall that God has accompanied you every step of the way during the day, and to open yourself to God's presence.

2. Thanksgiving. Identify reasons to thank God for favors and benefits received throughout the day. Examine your day, hour by hour, pointing out specifics: a cup of coffee, extra time with a friend, food you liked, a great soccer practice, help from a stranger. Gratitude keeps us humble since we recognize the author of all good things is God, hence inviting God to send us more blessings and graces!

3. Pray for a "Spirit of truth." Prepare for the next step by asking for the "Spirit of truth" to "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Prepare yourself to be honest as you examine your actions during the day, knowing that the truth will free you to grow closer to God. Recall, too, God's unconditional love for you.

4. Review. Next, examine how you responded (or didn't) to God's presence in the key events of the day. Examine your actions first, then the thoughts and words behind or motivating the act. What was the happiest thing that happened today? The most frustrating? Were there opportunities to do something good for your friends, family, or classmates? What gifts you were able to give others: help with a difficult task, a smile, work well done? What was a really difficult thing for you to do today? Review emotions, sentiments, attitudes, good actions, acts of charity, lights, ideas, spiritual desires, etc. This is the step when we need to see where God was present in our day. It reminds us that the spiritual life is not only about what I do for God, but what God does for me and in me.

Additional questions: When did I feel close to God? What good things did I do (for others or for God)? What did I learn about God? What did I say to God? Do I want to be close to God?

5. Forgiveness & Renewal. This last step provides the person with space to look for creative resolutions and hence is the very "cutting edge" of spiritual growth for the next day. Picture having face-to-face meeting with Jesus, one in which you respond in quiet prayer to the insights revealed in the previous steps - ask for forgiveness, consolation, encouragement, the grace to overcome bad habits, and direction for how to grow closer. Try to come up with specific resolutions to do the next day or week. Its likely more effective to say "I will not run around during lunch" than to say "I'll be good tomorrow". Continue to listen to Jesus as you resume your daily activities.

Younger Children

Introduce very young children to the idea of reviewing the day and bringing it to God by doing **Highs and Lows**. For children ages 5-9, try talking through the steps conversationally using this shortened method:

1. Beginning Prayer. Set a prayerful tone. "Let's pray about our day." [*Sign of the Cross*] "God, you have been with us all day long, since the time we woke up until now. Help us to remember our day so we can bring it to you."

2. What happened today? Review the events of the day, moving through the parts of the day and offering prompts as necessary. "What happened in the morning when we woke up? . . . What happened at school? . . . When we got home? . . . When were we angry? . . . Sad? . . . Happy? . . . What was beautiful? . . . What was amazing?" Optionally, write down responses on a dry erase board or in a prayer journal.

3. How was God present, and how did we respond? "How was God acting in your life today?" You will probably need to name this for your children at first, or supplement their responses with your own suggestions. It might be obvious that God is present in moments of beauty and joy, but you can help your children see how God is also present during times of challenge and sadness. Ask, "How did we respond to God's presence? When were we loving? When weren't we loving?"

4. Pray the day. Invite your children to think about what Jesus is saying to them through the events of the day. Ask guiding questions such as, "What do you think Jesus says about our day?" Invite them to pray in response: "What do we want to tell Jesus about what happened today?" Encourage simple words of praise, thankfulness, repentance, forgiveness, and petitions for the grace to draw closer to God in the coming day. Close with the Sign of the Cross.