

Prayers for wellbeing for All Ages

A daily examen (or an examination 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.

In addition, we have given you some ways of managing your emotions during this time of uncertainty; sometimes it is hard to cope with so many new feelings. Use these resources to help you to manage these things together as a family and offer them to God in prayer.

Create a peaceful place in your home. If you can, light a candle, place a cross or something that helps remind you of Christ’s love in this space. If you have children, you could have a drawing that they have done about God. After a moment of stillness begin with these words:

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

You might like to find a short bible reading, if you don’t have a bible in the house go to bible gateway online: <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Say these verses from Psalm 139:

“O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit or stand. When far away you know my every thought. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am. You know what I am going to say before I even say it. You both precede and follow me and place your hand of blessing on my head”

Read through each paragraph, giving space and silence to work through each section. If you are doing this with children, they may need to talk through and reflect out loud. Be open to whatever they say, listen without judgement or anxiety.

1. Remember you are in the presence of God wherever you are. Become aware of the ground beneath your feet, the chair you sit on, and become aware of your breath, rising and falling. Be aware of the silence and stillness and know God is with you.
2. Consider the day you have had. Think about each hour of the day, giving thanks. Think of the little things you have experienced, the kindnesses others have shown you, things you have seen. How was God present in these moments? Think about the things you have done for others, the kindness you may have given or shared? Give thanks to God for all these.

3. Pray for the “spirit of truth” to guide you to examine or look closely at your actions during the day. Be honest as you think through all your actions. What do you need to consider before God to bring us closer into the presence of the one who loves you so unconditionally?
4. How were you open to God’s presence in the events of the day? Next, examine how you responded (or didn’t) to God’s presence in the key events of the day. When were you loving? When did you miss an opportunity to love? When were you sinful? How much were you in charge of your actions, and what did you do out of simple habit? Pay attention to your emotions around these events. St. Ignatius taught that the Holy Spirit often speaks to us through our emotions, even the “negative” ones. What truth might God be leading you to through your emotions?
5. Bring it to Jesus. Finally, respond in prayer to the insights revealed in the previous steps. You may want to imagine this as a friendly face-to-face meeting with Jesus, one in which you offer words of sorrow, gratitude, or joy. You may want to ask for forgiveness, consolation, encouragement, the grace to overcome bad habits, and direction for how to grow closer to God. Continue to listen to Jesus as you resume your daily activities.

Give thanks to God for all his love and say a prayer of love on your own or as a family. This could be the Lord’s Prayer, the Grace or a Prayer that you have written yourself.

Finish your time together in prayer with these words:

May God bless us and show us compassion and mercy.
Amen.

These are difficult times for everyone, why not create a prayer chain at the end of your time of prayer? Each day write a different prayer on a slip of paper. It might be a prayer for you, something you are struggling with, or the emotions you are feeling. It might be for someone in your family, a friend or for different people or situations in the world. When the prayer is written, create a link and each day add link to link, like a paper chain. You could also consider journaling your experiences, the act of physically writing can help identify themes, emotions and promptings by God.

<https://healthspirituality.org/six-beginner-tips-for-writing-a-spiritual-journal/>

You could listen to a worship song or peaceful piece of music on YouTube as you do this. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKwcFiNe7xw>

At the end of this difficult time, you will have created a long chain of prayer; a visual reminder of the power of prayer and God’s love for us. Or if you have journaled, you can follow your journey with God and see how it has developed.

Resources adapted from <https://teachingcatholickids.com/a-daily-examen-for-children-and-teens/>