

The Ignatian Examen—Child Version



Introduce very young children to the idea of reviewing the day and bringing it to God by doing talking about the highs and lows (see below) of the day. For children ages 5–9, try talking through the steps conversationally using this shortened method:

1. Entering God’s presence. Set a prayerful tone. “Let’s pray about our day.” Make the 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 present to us 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.

Highs and Lows

A simple way to prepare young children for a lengthier, more involved examen is to begin with a daily “highs and lows” check-in. The whole family can participate!

At the end of the day (perhaps over dinner), have each person share their “highs” and “lows” for the day: What was the best thing that happened today? What was the worst? As each person shares his or her highs and lows, have another person offer a prayer for whatever that person mentioned.

Explain that we can give the events of our days back to God in prayer. We can give the “highs” back to God in the form of our joy and thanks, and we can give the lows back to God by “offering them up”—that is, uniting our suffering (no matter how small) with the suffering of Christ on the cross, so that God might take our suffering and turn it into something good, just as he did in the Resurrection. Say a simple prayer such as the Our Father or a spontaneous prayer of your own, or sing a song, as a way of offering your highs and lows to God.