

The Five Day Examen

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Guidance Notes

What is the Examen?

The Examen is a prayer created by St Ignatius, which gives us a structure for reflecting on our daily experiences, and seeing where God has been. There are many different versions, and those shared here are designed specifically for use with children within a primary school setting. This is the basic structure children for children to follow:

Part Of The Prayer	Intention
Bringing awareness to the body.	To focus attention on the here and now.
Looking back over the day.	To recall feelings and the events of the day.
Asking what was good today.	A chance to see the good within the day.
Asking what wasn't good today.	A chance to acknowledge things that were hard within the day.
Asking if there is something they feel sorry about.	A chance to acknowledge shortcomings and have them held with love as part of being human.
Looking forward to tomorrow.	A chance to voice hopes/concerns about tomorrow, and ask God for help.

Why is the Examen useful for children in schools?

The Examen gives children the chance to pause and reflect on their experiences and feelings at the end of what can be a fast paced and busy day. It can be done with the children's reflections remaining private, or they can be invited to share them with a partner and/or the class. If shared, it can be an invaluable opportunity for children for them to express something of their inner life, and for staff to gain this insight, which may otherwise not be possible within the day.

Resources to support schools and children

You might like to light a candle and/or play some settling music, but this is optional. Finding a few minutes for this type of reflective prayer within a day that is already full, is more than good enough!

Guidance Notes (continued)

What is the difference between the Monday Morning Examen and the Five Day Examen?

The Monday Morning Examen is optional, but helps to set the tone for the week by looking back over the weekend. It also provides children with a chance to reflect and share something of their experiences, which they may not otherwise have the chance to do.

The Five Day Examen then offers five slightly different versions of the same prayer to be used at the end of each school day. It can be used as it is, taking a version per day. Alternatively, select the version you feel most comfortable with or that your class responds best to, and use that same version each day. The intention is to offer variety so that you have choice and can adapt it to your own style and to the needs of your school and/or class.

Can I change the words or do I need to follow the script?

Prayer Leaders might prefer to follow the script, or to adapt it as they see fit, depending on the needs of their school/class.

For more information about how to lead the Examen, watch the film [here](#).

Monday Morning Examen

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

Let's start by paying attention to our breath. Can you feel your breath filling up your lungs then emptying out?

Think about all the breaths you must have taken since you left school on Friday, without even thinking about it! And that each breath has kept you alive!

As we start a new week let's first have a look back over the weekend we've just had, so we can recall what was happening and how we were feeling.

Did it feel like a normal kind of weekend, or was it different/special in some way?

Can you remember Friday after school? Did you spend the evening at home? Maybe you were somewhere else - with your grandparents, or some other relatives? Maybe you were at a club, or other activity?

How about Saturday? How did you spend your day? Who were you with? Were you at home most of the day or were you out somewhere?

How was your Sunday? Where were you? Was it a good day for you?

When you think about your whole weekend, what was the best part? Why? How were you feeling?

What was not good about your weekend? Why? How were you feeling?

Was there a time when you felt like you made a mistake? Maybe you feel that you did or said something unkind to someone, or maybe there was something kind/good you could have done or said, and you didn't.

Whatever it was, remember that we all make mistakes and when we say sorry, God will forgive us. Remember that each moment is a new moment and we always have the chance to make different choices.

As you think about your week ahead, is there anything you feel you would like to pray for or ask for God's help with? Maybe to do with your friends, your schoolwork, or something at home.

Spend a few moments now, asking for whatever help you may feel that you need this week.

The Five Day Examen

Monday Afternoon

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

First put your hand on your chest. Can you feel what happens as you breathe in and out?

Think about all the breaths you must have taken since you woke up this morning, without even thinking about it! And that each breath has kept you alive!

Now let's look back to see what has been happening today, and how you've been feeling while you've been taking all those breaths.

How were you feeling when you arrived at school?

How has your day been? Did you do some work you felt proud of? Was there something you found difficult?

How was your playtime?

How was your lunchtime? Did you enjoy your lunch?

Did it feel like a usual day, or was it different/special in some way? Perhaps it was your turn to do/share something, perhaps a visitor came into school, or perhaps you spent time somewhere different than usual.

Was there a time today when you felt happy? What was happening?

Was there a time you felt unhappy, or sad? Why was that?

Do you recall any ways you weren't kind today? If so, remember that every one of us make mistakes, and you always have new chances to do or say something kind and helpful. We always have new chances to say sorry and move on.

Now think ahead to tomorrow. Is there anything you're looking forward to, or not looking forward to?

God cares about everything you care about. Talk to God, asking for any help you need, knowing that you are loved, and that God is always there to listen to you.

The Five Day Examen

Tuesday Afternoon

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

First of all, put a hand over your heart. Can you feel it beating? Or can you find your pulse in your neck? Sit quietly and feel it for a minute. Remember that your heart has been beating all day, keeping you alive, without you having to tell it what to do!

Now let's take some time to see how you have been today while your heart has been beating all the time.

How did you feel when you woke up?
How was your morning?
How was your playtime and lunchtime?
What has been happening this afternoon?

What did you most enjoy today? Was it a time that you were in class, playtime, or some other time? Why did you enjoy it? How were you feeling?

What did you least/not enjoy today? Why was that? How were you feeling?

Was there anything you said or did that may have been hurtful? Maybe in the playground, or in a lesson? Or perhaps something that was hurtful to yourself? If so, remember that we can all do or say hurtful things, but forgiveness is always available. You are a special and unique person, and nothing ever changes that!

Now think about the rest of today and tomorrow. Is there something you are hoping for, or not looking forward to? To do with your friends, family, school, or anything else?

God cares about everything you care about. Talk to God, asking for any help you need, knowing that God always loves listening to you.

The Five Day Examen

Wednesday Afternoon

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

First, touch your ears. What do they feel like? What different sounds have you heard today? Let's sit quietly for a minute and listen. What can you hear? Remember that your ears have been listening and hearing sounds all day long!

Now let's reflect on today and see how you've been while your ears have been listening to all those sounds.

How was your morning? What did you learn?
How was playtime and lunchtime?
How have you been since you came back from lunch?

What was the best part of today for you? When did you have fun, or feel good? What was good about it? Was something funny, or interesting?

What was the worst part of today for you? Was there a time when you were feeling upset, stuck, confused, lonely, or something else?

Is there anything you feel sorry about that you said or did? Remember that we all do and say things we would like to change, or are not proud of. No matter what, you are special, you are loved, forgiven and you are cared for.

Now think about tomorrow. Is there anything you are looking forward to? Or not looking forward to?

God cares about everything you care about. Talk to God, asking for any help you need, knowing that God always loves listening to you.

The Five Day Examen

Thursday Afternoon

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

Put your hands up in the air. Imagine the joints of your shoulder and elbow moving to help your arms move.

Think about the other bones in your body, and how different they all are. Remember that you have been relying on your bones all day, to walk, run, play, write...

Now let's look back to see what has been happening today, and how you've been feeling while your bones have been moving you around.

How did you feel when you were on your way to school?
Has today been different/special in some way?
How were your playtimes?
How was it doing your work?

What was your favourite part of today? Why? How were you feeling?

What was your least favourite part of today? Why? How were you feeling?

Is there anything you said or did that that you felt sorry about today? We all do or say things we would like to change. You are a special, forgiven child of God no matter what. Each moment is a new chance to make a different choice.

Now consider how you feel about tomorrow. Is there anything you're looking forward to, or not looking forward to?

God cares about everything you care about. Talk to God now, asking for any help you need. Remember that you are loved, and God is always there to listen to you.

The Five Day Examen

Friday Afternoon

Incorporate gaps of silence for the children to reflect on each question.

First, take a look at your hands. Feel your fingers, feel the different ways your hands can move.

Feel the skin on your palms and on the back of your hand. Does it feel the same? Think about all the ways you have used your hands today.

Now let's look back to see what has been happening today, and how you've been feeling while your hands have been busy in so many different ways.

How was your morning?

How were your playtimes and lunchtime?

How was your afternoon?

When did you feel good today? Was someone kind to you? Were you kind to someone? Was there something that was fun, or that you feel you did well at?

Was there a time today when you didn't feel good? Was there a time when you felt left out or like you are not special?

Was there a time today when something happened that you are sorry for? Maybe something you did or said? Or something you didn't do or say?

Remember that you are a special, precious, forgiven child of God. Nothing ever changes that, and you always have new chances to do things you feel good about.

Now have a think about tomorrow. Is there anything you're looking forward to, or not looking forward to? God cares about everything you care about. Talk to God now, asking for any help you need. Remember that you are loved, and that God loves to listen to you.