

How to say goodbye to 2020

2020 has been a rollercoaster of a ride for our world. Sometimes it has felt like there were more downs than ups and I think most of us are rather glad that it is finally coming to an end! But, how do we say goodbye in a good way that helps us to move into 2021?

Back in the 1500's St. Ignatius of Loyola gave the church a spiritual practice called **the Examen**. There are whole books written on it, but in a very simple way it's about looking back on a span of time and rummaging through what's there. Many families and school classes actually do a version of the Examen without even knowing it when they name "highs and lows" from their day. Naming the sadness and the goodness helps us to move forward in a good way. Here are a few variations on the Examen you might try as you reflect on the past year.

Personal reflection

Set aside some quiet time and sit down in a favourite space in your home. You may want to have a journal or sheet of paper nearby. Invite God's presence. Move through the year and name what has been a challenge or brought sadness. Imagine God in solidarity with you and with the world for the challenges there have been. Next move through the year and name what has been a gift or brought joy. Imagine God rejoicing with you and with the world for the gifts there have been. Invite God to give you a word or an image to focus on in the year to come.

Reflection with another

Sit down with someone in your home (make sure they want to do this!) or with someone over the phone or online and reflect together. Take some time to silently write down 5 challenges or sadnesses from the past year. Share them with one another. Then write down 5 gifts or joys and share those as well. Wonder together about challenges you might face in the New Year. Wonder about how God might be present in those challenges as God was present in the challenges of the past year.

Make it a game

Year-end count downs can be a lot of fun for kids, youth, and adults alike. If your family likes to play games you could try this in-person or online. Invite each person to create a top-five list of challenges, frustrations, or sadnesses from the past year. Number 1 should be the most challenging. When everyone is done. Have someone call out the number 5 and have each person share their fifth most challenging item, then 4, then 3 and so on. Do the same with gifts or joys. End the game by having each person choose a word for one other person. The word should be like a prayer or hope for them in the New Year. For example, if their list of challenges included loneliness, you might offer them the word "connection."

Make it an art project

There are lots of creative ways you could reflect on the challenges and joys of 2020 through art. If you appreciate some direction, divide a piece of paper into three sections. In the first section create an image that shares a challenge or sadness from the past year. In the second, a gift or a joy and in the third, a hope for the year to come. This option can be used by even very young children and can be done alone or with others. For young children (ages 3-5), simply invite them to make a sad picture and a happy picture. Most often, they will choose something that happened fairly recently, and that's okay. School-aged children can be helped to reflect on the year by using categories. For example: something sad or joyful at school, at home, over the summer etc.