

THE BLESSING OF THE

New School Year



a Kendall Hunt Company

Introduction

The beginning of this new school year finds us in a variety of situations. You may be a teacher or catechist teaching in a classroom or teaching remotely. You may be parents who are teaching your children at home.

Whatever your situation, and whatever your start date, take time to ask God's blessing upon this new school year, and upon all learners and teachers striving to grow in knowledge and in faith.

Preparation

Prepare a prayer table (or your kitchen table, if at home) with a green cloth, a Bible, a candle, and a cross or crucifix. Invite your students (or your family) to gather around the table, and to bring with them some of the tools they will use this year in their learning (books, digital devices, pencils, paper, and so forth). Also bring some of the tools you will use in your role as a teacher or catechist.

Invite volunteers to share what most excites them about the new school year. Share your thoughts too.

To Begin

Light the candle and sing an opening hymn, such as "Be My Disciples," "We Are Marching," or "Open My Eyes."

Pray together the Sign of the Cross, then offer the following prayer: *Spirit of Wisdom, open our hearts and our minds to the many things we will learn in this new school year, and to the many ways you guide and help us each and every day. Amen.*

Word of God

Proclaim Ben Sira (Sirach) 6:32-37. (*Reading is available at uscgb.org/bible/readings.)*

NOTE: Those who teach younger children may wish to proclaim fewer verses, such as 32, 33, and 37.

Reflection

This reading is full of advice on how to become wise. Invite your students or your children to name some of the ways they heard mentioned in the reading. (*Repeat the reading if need be.*)

Welcome all replies, making sure that the following are named: apply yourself, listen, pay attention, stay close to those who are wise, be eager to hear what is taught, seek out the intelligent, reflect on God's laws, and study God's Commandments.

Prayer

Let us offer our prayers to Jesus our Teacher as we pray:

Jesus, Teacher, hear our prayer.

As we learn about the world, may we grow in understanding that all people are a part of the one family of God, we pray:

As we learn about our Catholic faith, may we grow in our love for God and one another, we pray:

As the new school year begins, may we remember that we are part of a larger community that includes the poor and those in need, we pray:

For those who are sick, those who have died, and all who are in sorrow, we pray:

For the prayers on our hearts this day, (allow time for silent reflection or time for those gathered to offer their prayers aloud) we pray:

Blessing

*Jesus, Teacher,
as the new school year begins,
we offer to you the tools of our learning.*

(If you choose, name some of these tools aloud, or invite the children to do so.)

*Help us use these tools to learn more about the world you have created,
your Word that shapes our lives,
and the Church that bears your name.*

*Bless those who will teach us,
(invite all to name their teachers),
all teachers everywhere,
and all in our lives who teach us by their example each and every day.*

*Bless us, and all students everywhere,
that we may grow in wisdom,
and in faith, hope, and love.*

*Together, as one, we seek to know you more and more, and we pray:
Our Father . . .*

Conclusion

Conclude by praying together the Sign of the Cross and singing the hymn you sang at the beginning of this prayer.

Following the Blessing

Carry the wisdom of the Scripture passage into coming days and weeks. Here are three simple suggestions for doing so.

1. Invite your students or children to write and illustrate key words and phrases taken from or suggested by the passage, such as: Apply Yourself; Listen; Pay Attention: Stay Close to the Wise; Seek Out the Intelligent; Reflect on God's Law; and Study God's Commandments. Post their work around your classroom or home.
2. Write each of the words and phrases on individual slips of paper or index cards. Make several copies of each. Every week for the first month of school, have each student or child draw one slip of paper or index card. Invite each child to concentrate on the word or phrase he or she has chosen for the coming week. At the end of the week, invite volunteers to share the word or phrase they chose and how they put that word or phrase into action. (For example, if a child drew "Seek Out the Intelligent," perhaps he or she asked another student for help with spelling words or Math problems. A child who drew "Apply Yourself" might have given more effort to a writing assignment.)
3. Make one word or phrase from the Scripture "Wisdom of the Week" for the entire class. Post the word or phrase on a bulletin board or on a classroom door as a reminder to all to continue growing in wisdom. As an alternative, post each word or phrase on mural paper that allows students or your children to write or draw their thoughts all around that word or phrase.