

Blessing of Children, Parents, Educators, Schools, Backpacks, Bikes

Leader: All who are students this year, from preschool to college, along with their parents, or those with them today, and anyone involved in education at any level; administrators, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, aides, food service employees, custodians, coaches, staff, please raise your hand. Whether or not you brought a backpack or bike with you today, we want to bless you as this school year begins.

Leader: Today you are receiving a gift. (*Pass out the carabiners*) They are a carabiner that you can attach to your backpacks. All of them have a compass on them. Maybe some of you are just beginning to discover the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Perhaps some of you know how to get to school, or a neighborhood park, or how to get home from a friend's house, and yet you are not yet sure of directions. Those of you who are learning to drive, or will be driving soon, are perhaps for the first time acknowledging more and more, if your destination is to the north, south, east or west, of where you are coming from, and where you are going to.

As our faith quest is renewed for us every day, and even though, for now, we do not have Sunday School as we know it, as our spiritual courses continue, we are each invited to believe and trust anew The Holy Spirit, God's grace, our Savior Jesus Christ, are blessing our journey, giving us direction, keeping us on track, pointing our way. "I am the way, the truth, and the life!" If we ever feel lost along the way on our faith quest, God will guide us and grace us again, for Jesus loves us this we know, for the Bible tells us so.

This year we encourage you to keep this carabiner on your backpack. May the compass help you grow in confidence as you learn your directions. May the compass and carabiner remind you, you are forever linked to God's love for you in Jesus Christ, who is always with you, and that God will forever faithfully keep you faithful and on course, forever trusting the Lord of your life.

Leader: Remember from Psalm 121 `The Lord bless you and keep you, your going out and your coming in from this time on and forever more. In the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit. Amen.' (*Each child is blessed, making a sign of the cross on their foreheads, saying*): "Jesus is with you wherever you go."

Leader: Congregation, you are asked to raise an arm, to visually join in laying your hands on one and all, as we share the following blessing and prayer: (*Those with children today invited to lay hands on them.*)

Leader: Let us pray: God of all knowledge and wisdom, bless these children, these students, parents, teachers, administrators, nurses, bus drivers, aides, food service employees, custodians, coaches, staff, backpacks and bikes as a new school year has begun.

All: We pray your blessing on these children and upon all students, young and old as their new year begins. Guard and protect students in their schools, on buses, in cars, on bikes, as they walk, everywhere, and as they go to and from school each day.

Leader: Help each student discover and develop the gifts you have given them. As they grow in knowledge, help them also grow in kindness and compassion. Bless all who serve the education of others, guide them in their vocation and calling, as they teach and nurture, support and validate each child, seeing them, too, as Your child.

All: By your Spirit, bless our schools, all students, all who go there, work and serve there, the classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, fields, and events to be places of safety, respect, learning and possibility. We ask your blessing on parents and all who love and care for these children. Strengthen our ministry and each of us as disciples; be our spiritual compass, give us direction, keep us on track, point the way. Bless each of us, too, as students of the faith, to teach God first, to make God and neighbor first, to surround all students with encouragement, support, and love, trusting even the most ordinary action is an extraordinary blessing to your Kingdom, as we believe and make known we are forever linked to you and your grace. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.