

Parish Resources

A Back to School Service for Primary School, with the Blessing of Schoolbags

Setting

This service can be incorporated into a Mass to begin the new school year, or it can be used as it is, whether in a church, classroom or school hall.

The service is structured around four objects: a candle, a Bible, a lunch box and the children's schoolbags. In preparation for the service, the children are invited to compose a narrative which will be read while the candle, Bible and lunch box are being brought forward. They may also be invited to prepare bidding prayers expressing their hopes for the new year. Before the service begins, the schoolbags are left by the altar (or in a prominent place in the classroom).

Order of service

All are welcomed and the service begins with the sign of the cross. The presider then invites the children to bring forward the candle, Bible and lunch box, while the narrative explaining the significance of these items is read.

Presider

Let us pray.

God our Father, you are with us as we begin this new school year, and we want to live as your children. We want to show your kindness to others and to know your help and strength in all that we do. Give us hearts ready to love, minds ready to learn about the wonderful world you have created, and hands always ready to reach out to others in kindness. Through Christ our Lord.

Suggested readings

Philippians 4:4-7 – ‘I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord...’
Psalm – ‘He’s got the whole world in his hands.’
John 8:12, 31-32 – ‘I am the light of the world.’

Presider’s reflection on the candle, Bible and lunch box

Jesus has told us that he is the light of the world. When people are in the dark, they can be confused and sad, but the friends of Jesus follow his light. When Jesus asks us to love each other, he is bringing light to situations where people



Photo: thinkstockphotos.com

might have stayed in the darkness of anger. When he asks us to be kind and forgiving, to include others, Jesus invites us to bring the light of kindness to whatever we do. During this school year, we will not be walking in the dark; we will be walking by the light of Jesus.

The Bible is God’s word. Words are so important! We listen to our parents, our teachers, our friends. Grownups want us to hear words that are sensible and wise; they hope that we will not hear or listen to words that are unwise, harmful or cruel. We grow wise and strong when people speak the right words to us. It’s above all in listening to the Word of God that we learn to be true and strong followers of Jesus.

We also brought forward a lunch box. What might it teach us? Without our lunch, we wouldn’t have the strength to keep going all day. We’d become weak; we wouldn’t be able to concentrate in class or play during break times. The lunch box reminds us that we need the love and care of others. The food we eat is a gift to us, prepared out of love. The lunch box also reminds us that we are fortunate to have the food we need. Not everyone in the world is so fortunate,

and so the lunch box invites us to remember those who are hungry, or who suffer in any way. May God help us to be kind and generous, in whatever way we can.

The children’s bidding prayers follow, and they are gathered together in the Lord’s Prayer.

Concluding blessing of schoolbags

Lord, we thank you for your goodness to all your children.
Be with these children throughout this new school year.
May your blessing be upon these schoolbags,
which the children will carry to and from school each day.
Watch over the children in their coming and their going;
keep them safe always; help them to be kind;
bless their learning and their play.
Enfold them at all times in your love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Closing Hymn

‘Give me joy in my heart.’