**Blessing of Schoolbags and Backpacks**



***What is This Initiative?***

This is a prayer resource for parishes to use within Sunday Mass during the month of September or at the start of a new term.

***Why This Initiative?***

September is a time for so many families within the parish when they are getting back into the school routine and all that entails. As the new academic year commences, families, children and parents alike, all hold the shared hope of a positive and happy year for students. This initiative touches into that common hope, bringing God’s grace and blessing into the heart of that desire.

***What Resources Are Available?***

This resource offers a bulletin notice template, suggestions for promotion and carrying out this blessing, as well as a prayer for use.

***How Does This Work in A Parish?***

1. Advertise it well in advance using the newsletter, Facebook, parish website and local papers, encourage members of the Sunday congregation, ministers, choir members, servers, JPII students etc to invite their friends and neighbours.
2. Depending on the size of your parish it might be an idea to have this blessing at all the weekend Masses!
3. Don’t just invite the primary school children spread the word to all going back to school including the teachers. It might be a great opportunity for evangelisation!
4. ***Keep it Simple***
* Decide at which point in the liturgy you are going to bless the bags. Perhaps linking it to the homily would be a good idea.
* Invite those who bring bags to place them at the front of the church as they arrive.
* When it is time to bless the bags invite all those who have brought bags to come forward and lift them up.

**Sample Bulletin Notice**

***September Blessing of School/College Bags***

As the new academic year is getting underway, students, teachers and their families are invited to join us for a blessing of school/college bags during Mass on **date and time.** This is a chance to bring God’s blessing on all the hopes and dreams every student and their families have for the year ahead. So please share this with friends, family and neighbours by word of mouth and social media.

**Blessing Prayer**

*Use the following or similar prayer(with hands extended in blessing):*

God of love, we believe that you are the source of all wisdom, peace and true happiness.

As we remember all who have started back to school in these recent weeks, we pray that they begin this new year of learning with open minds and open hearts. May it be a year full of promise for each one of them and for all who will guide

and teach them.

May they continue to grow in knowledge, wisdom and love for God and one another.

Send down your blessing on these backpacks and all who carry them during this school year. When they feel nervous, may they be filled with God’s peace,

when they are distracted, may the light of God’s wisdom give them focus and when they feel tired, may God’s Holy Spirit fill them with energy.

May their minds always be open to learning. May their friends always build them up and may they be a friend who supports and encourages.

May they always be aware of God’s loving presence in every moment of every day and may they bring that loving presence to everyone you meet. And may almighty God bless you… Amen.

**A Constant Reminder of God’s Loving Presence**

Consider giving a prayer card or bag/backpack tag to each child before they leave. These could be simple cards, (credit card size) with a prayer/scripture quote and the name of the parish.

**A Couple of Examples: A Student Prayer - Anonymous**

God of love and wisdom,

Help me to be curious about the world around me;

Help me to be prepared for the challenges I face each day.

Help me to be open to difficult tasks.

Help me to be determined to complete my work.

Help me to be responsible in all I do.

Help me to be accepting of people’s differences.

Help me to be kind in my thoughts and words.

Help me to be aware of my talents.

Help me to be myself – to be the best that I can be.

**A Student Prayer - Anonymous**

Father of Light and Wisdom, thank you for giving me a mind that can know
and a heart that can love. Help me to keep learning every day of my life-- no matter what the subject may be. Let me be convinced that all knowledge leads to you and let me know how to find you and love you in all the things you have made.

Encourage me when the studies are difficult and when I am tempted to give up; Enlighten me when my brain is slow and help me to grasp the truth held out to me. Grant me the grace to put my knowledge to use in building the kingdom of God on earth so that I may enter the kingdom of God in heaven. Amen.