

First Year Liturgy

Introduction/Opening Prayer:

One of the things that makes our school special is that we believe that on big and important days like this we should come together for a short time to pray and spend some time with God. And this day, your first day with us, is a really big and important one for the whole school community too. We know that this is a time of great change for you as you move from primary to secondary school. We know that your primary school days did not end in the way you would have liked them to, and you're probably feeling a bit sad about that today. Some of you may be feeling a little afraid of or anxious about what lies ahead while others may be confident and glad to be here. It's important to remember that no matter how we feel today, it is OK. All will be well. God is with you as you take this step; your parents, guardians, teachers, coaches and friends are right here also to help.

Today, we come together to ask for God's help during your time in secondary school. We ask God to bless you, your families, your studies, your sports, your hobbies and, most of all, your friendships with each other.

We'll begin by lighting candles which are symbols of light, hope and peace. They remind us that we are not alone, but are here together for one another, and that God is always with us too.

As we begin our time today, we light three special candles:

Candle 1:

We light our first candle today for all of you present. Every person in this room is embarking on something new today. You all have hopes, dreams, and desires for the future. As we light this candle, we ask God to give you the drive, energy, and vision to go out and achieve all the things you want to do in your first year of secondary school.

Candle 2:

We light the second candle for the rest of our school community. We return today following a rocky end to the last school year and, as we light this candle, we formally begin our new year together and ask God to be with us every step of the way.

Candle 3:

We light our final candle for the wider world. People all over the planet are experiencing a lot of pain, turmoil and upset right now. As we light this candle we are showing our solidarity with people who are suffering today, and asking God to ease their pain.

Gospel Reading:

We pause now to listen to a story from the Gospel of Matthew.

One day, as evening was approaching, Jesus said to his friends, the disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake."

Leaving the crowd behind, they all climbed into the boat. When they were in the middle of the lake, a furious storm came up. The winds howled, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples were very frightened so they woke him, and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

With that, Jesus got up, calmed the waves, and said to the wind, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him."

This is the word of the Lord.

Reflection on the Gospel:

This story from the Bible is one that really relates to how some of us may be feeling today....[Students may be invited to say how they are feeling].

In this scripture Jesus and his friends embark on a journey together across the lake, just like all of you are embarking on a new journey together today, as you begin your time with us in _____.

And just like some of you may be feeling today, Jesus' friends became frightened and overwhelmed at times by what was happening around them as the storm got louder and louder.

Over the next few weeks you may feel overwhelmed and maybe even frightened as you embark on your journey together. There are lots of new faces, new subjects, new places, new times and new teachers to get to grips with.

In the story, when the apostles became frightened, they turned to Jesus, their friend, for comfort and reassurance. He reminds them that he is always there for them, and not to lose faith.

As you settle in over the next few weeks, you too should turn to the many people who are here to help you: your friends, teachers, tutors, chaplain. All of us are here to help you settle in as you get to know the place, and, just like Jesus' friends were not afraid to ask him for help, you should not be afraid either.

In these coming weeks it is really important that you all try to be there for each other. Remember that God is always by your side, guiding and helping you. So, like Jesus' friends in the story, don't lose faith.

So how can we look out for one another? Some ideas....

If you see somebody over the next while who is struggling, don't be afraid to be the one to step up and help them. If they are lost, show them the way. If they are confused about something, set them on the right path. If they have a question, and you know the answer to it, be the one to tell them. If we are all there for each other over the next few weeks, your move from primary school to secondary school will be a breeze. And ,while things might be a bit unsteady in the first few weeks as we return to school, remember that they will settle down eventually. This time of uncertainty will pass and, before you know it, this place will become as normal to you as your old primary school ever was.

Prayers of the Faithful:

We will now have some prayers of the faithful:

1.

Loving God,

Give us the gift of hope and courage so that we can face the wonderful opportunities and challenges that await us as we go through our time together in _____.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

2.

Loving God,

Give us the gift of wisdom so that we may grow in knowledge, and learn respect for the world we live in.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

3.

Loving God,

Give the gift of your protection to all the students and staff that make up our school community.

Especially in these difficult times, protect us and keep us safe always.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

4.

Loving God,

We pray for each other, the first year students of 2020. As we journey together and grow in knowledge, friendship, empathy and love, may we always feel the presence of God in our lives.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

5

Loving God,

We pray for our families and all those who love us and help us. Take care of them too, please.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Prayer of Thanks:

As we look back over the last six months, we offer a prayer of thanks to God for blessing us with people who went above and beyond the call of duty in our time of need. These people cared for those who needed caring. They protected those who needed protecting, and they kept on providing the essential services that made sure our lives could bear some resemblance to normality.

Today we say a prayer of thanks to God for all of those...

Patient caring
Scrub wearing
Stethoscope slinging
Prescription filling
Ward cleaning
Phone answering
Tea making
Street sweeping
Bin collecting
Letter posting
Green growing

Shelf stacking
Shop running
Passenger moving
Meal making
Lorry driving
Cow milking
Garda patrolling
Food producing
Child minding
Home schooling
Online zooming
Volunteering
Prayer saying
Socially distant
Superheroes.
May God continue to bless them and those they love. Amen.

Closing prayer:

We present you now with a bookmark that you might like to keep in your school journal. On the bookmark is a special prayer in honor of your first day with us. We invite you now to stand as we recite our closing prayer together.

Dear Lord,

We pray for each other in first year.

We pray that we grow in friendship over our time together.

We pray that we will be there for each other.

We pray that we will support each other.

We pray that on the tough days we will be there to help one another.

We pray for health and happiness of everybody in our new school.

Amen.



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