

The Lamplighter

A Blessing for Students and Teachers at the Beginning of the School Year

Preparation

The beauty of this liturgy is that in some respects it requires little preparation. Depending on the school this service is adaptable to large or small gatherings. It can be used in the context of a classroom or whole school, as part of the celebration of Mass or apart from it. Prepare a sacred space in a prominent place which should have a large candle as its centrepiece. The space may contain other elements that represent the school and spiritual lives of the pupils and teachers.

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Opening Prayer

Loving God, thank you for the joys that summer brought to us. You have blessed us with time to spend with family and friends, rest and relaxation, and a break from school work. As we return to our studies, inspire us to take on a new interest in new classes and new topics. Be with us as we discover old friendships and start new ones. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

(Mt 5:13-16)

Ritual of the Lamplighter

Before the age of electricity, city streets were lit by gas lamps. Lamplighters lit these lamps with a flaming torch. One night an old man stood looking across a valley to a town on a hillside. He could see the torch of the lamplighter lighting lamps as he went. But because of the darkness, he could not see the lamplighter. He could see only his torch and the trail of lights he left behind. The old man said to a friend standing next to him, "That lamplighter is a good example of how the Christian ought to live. You may never know them, but you know that they passed through the world by the trail of lights they leave behind."

(Lamplighter Story according to Mark Link, S.J)

Using the symbols in the Sacred Space the leader of the prayer service can indicate to students and teachers the ways in which they can let their light shine for others and for themselves during the coming school year. The leader will then invite a participant to light the candle at the centre of the Sacred Space with these or similar words:

At the dawn of creation God gave us the light of the sun, moon and stars that we might find our way in life. As we light our candle, may the love of God open us to the possibilities that this year together will bring.

Participant Lights the Centre Candle

Leader

Let us offer prayers of petition to our Lord.

Reader The response is, "Lord, hear our prayer."

1. For our school, may it continue to be a beacon of light to the students, teachers, staff, and parents involved in this community. We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)
2. For the Church, may it continue to bring light to those in darkness. We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)
3. For all people who have made this new school year possible, especially all who work in and for our school. Bless their work now and throughout this school year. We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)
4. For the students, may we join together in unity and support of one another in the classroom and outside of it. We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

The Lord's Prayer

As we begin a new school year we join together as one family to pray in the words that Jesus taught;
Our Father

Beginning of Year Prayer

We give you praise, O God, for everything that is new and beautiful,
for everything which holds promise and brings us joy.
Bless us as we start this New Year with our friends and teachers
Help us to make the most of every chance we have to start afresh.
May we show love to one another and to all.
May the new beginning of this school year
remind us that you give us chances to start over again and again.
Help us to forgive others as we receive your forgiveness.
Help us to learn and to work together.
Help us to listen when we should and to know the best words when we speak
and when it is better not to speak.
We thank you for our friends
Help us to be good friends this year.
Help us to be patient
with ourselves and with others.
Bless our school and keep us safe.
Be with us as we travel each day.
Help us to be aware of your love shown to us in the people around us.
Bless all those who care for us in school and at home.
Help us show our care for them and to say sorry when we need to.
May (our saint) protect us and help us to live as well as we can
Giving thanks and glory to God as they did.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen