

This September is unlike any other September we have ever experienced. Our country, indeed our world, has witnessed great change as a result of the spread of Covid-19. It is in such times of need that we appreciate our faith more than ever. In times of grief and loss we can turn to God for comfort. It is envisaged that this short prayer service can be used in individual classrooms, as a full school assembly will not be possible. Schools should feel free to adapt the prayer service to suit their own needs. Some may wish to incorporate aspects of the prayer service in their daily class prayer rather than as one single prayer service. For the prayer service, you may wish to light your candle in the sacred space in the classroom. You may also wish to play a song from the Grow in Love programme while the class are settling down.

Prayer Service for the opening of the 2020 school year:

Teacher:

We begin our prayers together by marking ourselves with the sign of our faith:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction:

Today is a very special day. Today we reopen our school after being closed for almost six months.

In order to keep our communities safe, we have had to spend time apart but now we are back together again. There are changes to our school, but we all understand that they are necessary to keep us all safe and well. We thank God that we have been able to open our school and be together again as a school community. We begin by asking God's blessing on us all, as we face our new school year together.

Through God's love we have hope in the future. The news headlines may continue to remind us of the presence of coronavirus in our country and we might be worried or anxious about how it might affect us or our families or friends, but we trust in God and through our prayers we ask him to keep us safe.

Reader:

Scripture: Isaiah (43:1-5)

The Lord who created you says, 'Do not be afraid – I am with you. I have called you by name

– you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; Your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burnt; the hard trials that come will not hurt you.

For I am the Lord your God, the holy God of Israel, who saves you. I will give up whole nations to save your life, because you are precious to me and because I love you and give you honour. Do not be afraid – I am with you.’

The word of the Lord.

Teacher:

God our Father, we know that you love and care for us. Thank you for bringing us together again as we start a new school year. We pray that this year we will grow in faith and love. We pray that our minds and hearts will be open to the friendships and opportunities that we meet along our school journey this year. We ask God to bless us and keep us safe during our time at school.

Intercessions:

Reader 1

We thank God that we have all been able to come back together at school. We ask God to bless our work and play this year.

Reader 2

We welcome all the pupils that are new to our school, especially our Junior Infants. We pray that together we can continue to learn and grow in God’s love.

Reader 3

We thank God for our teachers. They guide us in our learning and care for us. We ask God’s blessing on their work.

Reader 4

We thank God for all our school staff who have worked so hard to make sure our school is safe to open again. May God bless them in their work.

Reader 5

We pray for the frontline workers who have shown such courage in this crisis. May God bless them and keep them safe and strong.

Reader 6

We pray for our families who love and care for us. Please God keep them safe and well.

Reader 7

We pray for families and friends who have had to spend time apart and are missing each other. Please God give them comfort and strength when they feel lonely.

Reader 8

We pray for those who lost someone close to the coronavirus. May God help them in their grief and console them in their loss.

Teacher:

We pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

We say together St Patrick's Breastplate. This prayer reminds us that God is always with us:

St Patrick's Breastplate

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ within me,
Christ below me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right hand,
Christ on my left hand,
Christ in my sleeping,
Christ in my waking,
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ in the mouth of all who speak of me,
Christ in every eye that looks at me,
Christ in every ear that listens to me.
Amen.

We end our prayer service as we began by marking ourselves with the sign of faith: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The following is an alternative, shorter prayer service suitable for infants to second class.

Teacher

We begin our prayers together by marking ourselves with the sign of our faith:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction:

Coming back to school this year feels different to other years. We have been away for so long.

You may notice that there are changes to the way the school looks and feels. Some of the usual things we do are different.

Change can feel exciting and sometimes fun but it can also be a little bit scary.

We light our candle today to remind us that God is always with us.

We ask God's help not to be afraid or anxious about all the changes that we see around us.

For our new pupils in Junior Infants, we ask that they will settle in and be happy in their new school. Starting big school can be a nervous time but it is especially so this year.

Let us take a moment to think about something or someone that might be making us anxious or worried about the year ahead.

We ask God's help in overcoming our fears. We know that God will be with us when we need his help and support. We know that with his help we will be able to face the year ahead with courage.

Intercessions:

1. Please God keep us safe as we work and play together. We know you are with us every step of the way.
2. Please God keep our families and friends safe and well. We thank God for their love and support and we ask God to continue to look after them.
3. We thank you God for our teachers and all who work in our school. We ask you to bless them and keep them safe.
4. We thank God for all those who look after the sick at this time. We ask God to bless them and help them with their difficult work.

5. Lord we know that it will be hard at times this year because of the corona virus, We ask you to guide us with your light and protect us.

Teacher

We pray that the Lord will guide our hearts and our minds so that we will all work together for the good of our school and all the people in it. We ask God to fill us with love, hope and courage so that we can use our many gifts and talents to be the best that we can be. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us finish by praying together to Mary the mother of Jesus.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

We end our prayer time as we began by marking ourselves with the sign of faith: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.