

# Along the track

## For Those Going to School

The start of another year so at this time we think of all those going back to school, the students, the teachers and all those who work to make the school a place of welcome and discovery. We pray especially for those who are starting out on this new stage of life. And memories may come flooding back about our own school days too.

We took school pretty much for granted until Covid lockdown. So many had opinions about education what it should be doing and possibly wasn't. But then lockdown made going to school a privilege, a luxury almost. That wasn't an easy time for all involved and new pressures and unintended consequences emerged everywhere. On the other hand, a new appreciation of educators and schools emerged, a new understanding and certainly a welcome creativity in how students were kept in touch with their teachers and their fellow students. On the other hand, isolation took its toll and made life even more difficult for many.

So at this time we remember that education is a work of holiness, another word for wholeness. We could say that education is about making Jesus' words come to being: I have come that you may have life to the full. Education is a sacred task – it is inspired by the Spirit, it relies on the power of the Spirit. It is designed to bring to life in every person the gifts of the Spirit who is lovingly at work helping each one on his or her life journey.

Parents are the first educators. You are agents of the Spirit. What you do matters more than what you say. You are the first to awaken in your child a desire to learn by nurturing your child's curiosity, their wonder and excitement, you are the first to introduce your children to the world, to his or her name, their family and its story, to who they are and you work to give them a healthy sense of self-awareness and a sensitivity to others. Your children watch what you do, how you care for them, and how you treat others, where your priorities lie. In other words, how you bring love to life in their lives.

Teachers too have the ability to touch hearts and lives in countless ways. Each day you have the opportunity to enable your students to discover the wonders of the universe and the mystery of their own being and you can help them to discover life-changing knowledge and experiences.

The sacred task of the educator is not only to introduce students to new skills and information but also to lead them to discover the life-giving Spirit already at work within them and to uncover what that extraordinary gift means. We give thanks for those teachers among us who are listeners and gentle guides, who care and inspire, who expect much and love much, who notice a child's special gift and fans the flame so that learning will be fun for children and that they don't lose heart. We pray that teachers may have a gracious attitude towards each child and the wisdom and compassion to notice anyone that may be fearful or afraid.

We give thanks too for those who work to make the school a place of welcome, those who create the hospitable environment, from the welcoming presence at the front desk, those who care for the sick and the sorry, those who work to keep the school clean and safe and inviting, and maintain its gardens and its playgrounds. They all help this to be a life-giving place for all who come here. May those who work here be protected by God's loving presence. May all who come here find a place of respect and kindness and may prayer, joy and laughter never be strangers here.

Being a first educator in faith in the home or at school means living what we believe, making present and meaningful the good news of God's creating and redeeming love. Faith comes alive and grows in the day to day experience of love and acceptance, in encountering the joy and the awe of creation and in the wonders of new discoveries and learning. Words help to describe these experiences but sometimes they are not even necessary. The first educator opens the student to the possibility of God, to their gifts and talents and how they might use them. The first educator opens the students to God's dream for this world and how he or she might become a part of it.

Regards  
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