

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

HOMEGROWN FAITH

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Caring Conversations

The fall is not only the time for the beginning of another school year. It ushers in a whole series of activities following the summer months. Whether your focus is the beginning of the school year or simply another year of post-summer activities, use the following sentence starters to encourage reflection and conversation: "I am excited about..."; "I am concerned about..."; "I can't wait for..."

Devotions

Luke 2:52 reads, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor." Growth is a part of life, even for Jesus, the Son of God. Consider how your physical, mental, relational, and spiritual growth affects your daily life and service to God, others, and all creation. Make a list of the ways your life is a gift of God, to others, and to God's total creation. Then offer a prayer, including mention of each of these ways: **Dear God, you have blessed me to be a blessing to others, to grow in wisdom, in years, and in human and divine favor. May my life reflect your grace and your will as I serve you, others, and creation through [name the ways your life is a gift of God]; through Jesus Christ who increased in wisdom and stature, and in human and divine favor. Amen.**

Service

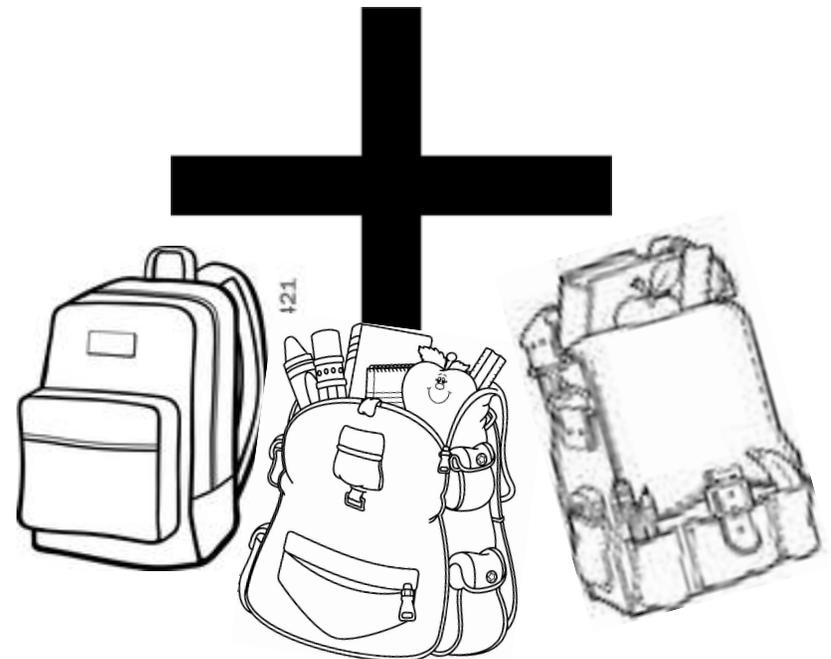
Our lives are filled with learning. We learn through many social contacts. We learn at school, in the home, in the congregation, on the job, through various media, and in the community. Make a commitment in the next month to be of service by helping someone else learn. Maybe you can be a "book buddy" at school; maybe you can help somebody learn how to run a computer program at work or develop a skill with a tool. In some manner, assist someone in her or his lifelong pursuit of learning.

Rituals and Traditions

[For parents with school-aged children] Make the sign of the cross on the forehead of your child before he or she leaves for school, saying, "*[Child's name]*, Jesus goes with you wherever you go." Remind your child that you think about and pray for him or her during the day.

[For people without children in school] Place a cross where you work, study, or relax to remind you of God's constant presence in Christ.

[For people without students to bless] For the next seven days, begin and end the day with the words, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Pray the Lord's Prayer, then begin your day or retire for the night.



God goes with us wherever we go!