

First Day of School

New Beginnings

Heading off to school on the first day can be daunting for parent and child alike, as there are so many questions in one's mind. "What will the new year be like?" "Will I like my teacher?" "Will my child be happy?" This is a yearly tradition involving making a copy of your child's footprints on the first day of school and saying a simple prayer for the year to come. This tradition also relates to the graduation ceremony listed next.

Designed for Ages **Preschool—Senior in High School**

Materials

1. Construction paper
2. Washable tempera paint
3. Wide paintbrush
4. Shallow pan of soapy water
5. Washcloths and towels

Time Investment: 30 minutes

How To

1. On the night before or the morning of the first day of school, paint the bottom of your child's feet with a wide paintbrush and ask him or her to step on a piece of construction paper. As he or she does, say,

"Your feet remind us of the journey you will take this year at school. I know that you will learn so many new things and go so many new places. I hope that you will go with courage and strength and know that God goes with you too."

2. Before the child steps off the construction paper, say this short prayer, "God please be with [child's name] as [he/she] heads off on

[his/her] first day of school. May the year be full of new experiences and knowledge, and may [he/she] walk in light and truth every day. Amen.”

3. Wash off the paint from the child’s feet and head off to a new year!

Notes

- The time investment for this activity is listed at 30 minutes, but it actually takes much less time. The reason for the inflated time is simple: nobody should be rushed on the first day of school! Take the extra time to avoid a stressful morning, or do it the night before.
- Those who are coming to this tradition with older children might be tempted to skip it, thinking, “Well, we haven’t done it in the past, we should just skip it.” I think it’s never too late to start a new tradition, and this is an easy one to start at any time! Go ahead and start it, no matter how old your children are!

Variations

- Do handprints instead of footprints.
- Show the footprints from previous years and notice how the child has grown and changed.
- Trace around the hand or foot and make handprints or footprints that way.
- Do this every year on the last day of school instead of the first, and talk about all of the places the child has gone in the past year.