

Opening Prayer:

Blessed are you, Creator, God of new beginnings, for you challenge us to constantly move beyond our pasts and call us into fresh possibilities for the future. Blessed are you Lord of the impossible, for you never get discouraged and never cease to hope believe and strive for a happier, fairer world.

Blessed are you God of the covenant, for you make promises and never break them, for you trust us to do good and love us even when we fail, daily renewing our confidence and courage.

God of unconditional love, help us to believe in ourselves as you believe in us. Help us to see our potential as you see it. Constantly provide us with the new opportunities which your covenant promises and inspire us with the dreams to follow new paths of potential growth and goodness. Amen

Before we begin this new academic year let us take some time to consider how we can each strive for a happier and fairer world in and through our school communities. Let us take time to think about how we are called to encourage and build up confidence in ourselves and in others. Let us become more aware of the opportunities all around us to be Christ like to those we encounter.

Let us reflect on God's word to us in John's Gospel:

Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.'

Pause for a few moments to reflect on the words of Jesus.

Pope Francis invites us to pray using our fingers to remind us who to pray for:

1. The thumb is the closest finger to you. So start praying for those who are closest to you. They are the persons easiest to remember. Think of all of those who are dear to you. This is often family and friends. Think of their special needs at this time and pray for them by name.
2. The next finger is the index. Pray for those who teach you, instruct you and heal you. They need the support and wisdom to show direction to others. These could be parents, grandparents, teachers, priests, etc. Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen them in their own lives and help them understand how to help you. Pray for them by name.
3. The following finger is the tallest. It reminds us of our leaders, the governors and those who have authority. They need God's guidance. Pray that they might lead our country and society in a direction which brings us closer to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire them to do what is right. Think of the issues in the news and pray that our leaders have the wisdom to make good decisions in these matters.
4. The fourth finger is the ring finger. It is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for the weakest, the sick or those plagued by problems. They need our prayers. Pray for those on the margins – the poor, the sick, the young, the aged, the unwanted, the ignored, the discarded. Ask for the strength and courage to serve others.
5. And finally we have our small finger, the smallest of all. Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. When you have prayed for the other four groups, you will be able to see your own needs in perspective. Pray for yourself last.

Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer



Loving Father be with us during this coming year. Keep us safe. Continue to guide us in your ways and show us how we can reflect your love to others as you would want us to. We ask this through Christ our Lord,

Amen.