

School is starting. This year, some of our kids are heading to a building. Others are going to school online. Still others are being home-schooled out of necessity or by choice. I love looking at all the first-day-of-school pictures that are popping up on social media. Because I remember taking many of those photos myself. . . like the one at the right of Bethany (who grew up to be a school teacher herself) ready to cross the threshold for her first day of Kindergarten 28 years ago!

I know that there's always some nervousness mixed in with the excitement. . . maybe even some fear. . . in the heart of the one taking the picture.

Because I was always concerned for the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of my own four kids, I would often times pray for them during the course of the school day. I knew that either they or the people around them might make choices that would be unwise, dangerous, sketchy, or even immoral. I wanted them to make choices that were wise, safe, full of integrity, and God-honoring. So, I would pray for their protection. I'm doing the same for my grand-children these days.



My prayer would typically include a few lines about God's protection over, under, in front of, in back of, and on either side of them. In recent years, I discovered that I was praying words similar to those from what's oftentimes called "St. Patrick's Morning Prayer," a short version of which I've adapted below. I've changed it from the first person to the third person so that you can, if you choose, use it to pray for your kids. . . today, and everyday!

*As they head out in the world today,
may the strength of God pilot them,
the power of God uphold them,
the wisdom of God guide them.
May the eye of God look before them,
the ear of God hear them,
the word of God speak for them.
May the hand of God protect them,
the way of God lie before them,
the shield of God defend them,
the host of God save them.
May Christ shield them today.*

*Christ with them, Christ before them,
Christ behind them,
Christ in them, Christ beneath them,
Christ above them,
Christ on their right, Christ on their left,
Christ when they lie down, Christ when they sit,
Christ when they stand,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of them,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of them,
Christ in every eye that sees them,
Christ in every ear that hears them.
Amen*

For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at www.cpyu.org.

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