Prayers on the First Day of a New School Year

Another school year has begun. I waved goodbye to my three kids this morning, one off to each school – high school, middle school and elementary school. Of course, we took our customary front-step photo, each of them doing their best not to roll their eyes. Me? I was doing my best not to openly weep. It's true what they say about time.

After the last one left and it was just me in an empty house, I decided I needed to have a conversation with God. I was feeling sad, realizing how quickly my kids were growing up. And I was feeling anxious, thinking of all the obligations and activities the school year brings. So, I warmed up my cup of coffee and turned my attention to God.

I opened my prayers with gratitude, thanking God for the blessing of another lovely summer filled with swimming, fishing, campfires and running barefoot through the grass. It's hard to say goodbye to all that, but it helps when you can remember it with a glad heart.

Next, I asked God to walk with each of my children this year as they journey through a new year, new teachers, new subjects and new adventures. I know I can't be there with them every day, through everything. But God will be. It's a comfort to know that at those moments when they need to make important choices, God's gentle and guiding presence will be at their side.

I also asked God to help them to be careful with their words and actions, to treat others with respect and to give them the wisdom and courage to do the right thing, even when it's difficult. We've practiced this at home, talking through struggles with peers or teachers and figuring out what they

can do to overcome these particular challenges. It’s difficult to sit by and watch my kids struggle. I don’t want to see them sad or lonely; I want to jump in and fix or give advice. But I know I need to give them space and time to sort things out. It’s in those struggles that I’ve seen my kids really learn important life lessons and grow, and I grow, too.

Finally, I asked God to help me foster in my children the willingness to work hard, resiliency to bounce back when they fail at something (which they will) and kindness to lift others up. I know with these tools they will be able to navigate through most anything that comes their way.