

Embracing the Road to Independence

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, and welcome to this prayer to begin our inservice for Early Childhood Educators and Educational Assistants. Our theme this morning's prayer is *embracing the road to independence*.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

And let us pray. We thank you, God, for this day – for the chance to gather and discuss our challenges and successes. Help us to be open to your wisdom today as we reflect on how to help your children embrace the road to independence in their lives. We make this prayer to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

READING

A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1Cor 12:12-19)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

The word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Saint Paul saw that every member of the faith community had a gift to contribute to the body of believers. Those of us called to work with the most vulnerable members of our school communities see the gift in in these students as well. We know that each student's gifts, no matter how humble, are important to the community. We want them to know this for themselves. We seek to help them recognize their gifts; we encourage and nudge them forward – sometimes with all our persuasive powers – to develop their skills and talents, to embrace the road to independence in their lives.

The challenges of independence can seem overwhelming to students. But we know there is often no easy way to grow. We can help them see each new challenge as an opportunity to be embraced – a chance to develop more fully as the person God created them to be. We can set them free to embrace these challenges with the encouragement and problem-solving skills we provide. We know that each step they take on the road to independence is a step forward in hope and fulfillment, to claiming their rightful place in the body, the community and the world.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Let us pray for the Church. That all who share a common Baptism might recognize and uphold the giftedness of every member of the believing community.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the world. That all people's hearts will be moved to help one another grow in hope and fulfillment as God's children.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all those who long to be independent – that God might send them the people they need to help them along this road.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for ourselves, that our hearts and minds might always be inspired with hope and vision for those we are called to help embrace the road to independence.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

For our own intentions...

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us gather all our prayers, spoken aloud and in our hearts and unite them as one, using the prayer Jesus taught us: *Our Father...*

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you for calling us to make such meaningful contributions to the lives of your children. May your wisdom, hope and joy be our constant companions as we help them embrace the road to independence. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, your Son. Amen

And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.