



BACK TO SCHOOL LETTER FROM ZACH GRIGGS

For some in our community, the end of August means it's time to go back to school. I remember when I was a child, August seemed to go twice as fast as the other summer months as we shopped for school supplies, crammed procrastinated book projects, and squeezed in one last weekend trip. Some years, I was excited to return to school rhythms and see old friends and new teachers. Other years, a new school meant anxious knots in my stomach; even a sense of dread. This year, I'm also going back to school as I start seminary with orientation in Washington, D.C. this Friday. And while I wouldn't say I'm dreading it like 6th grade, I am nervous about the workload, writing papers again, if I'll make new friends, and even where to sit at lunch.

When I was in elementary school I always wanted to be at the top of the class, putting in the extra work to get an A+ or be noticed by my teachers. It was little different in high school, with the added pressure of looking perfect on my college applications. I find that too many kids go through school this way, thinking the goal in study and in life is never to make mistakes.

And yet, there are some things in life with God and each other that can only be discovered through "missing the mark." As we keep "failing in the right direction," we are learning more about the subject of our study – but even better, we're getting a crash course in Grace. Getting it wrong is at the core of what it means to be a human in relationship with God. The best part is that God, our Teacher, is always with us to say, "I know you're doing your best, don't give up! I love you when you're right, when you're wrong, and especially when you think you've ruined everything. I'm here, let's find the way together."

That's a learning process that doesn't end with High School graduation! We are all— young and old, just-beginning and long-experienced—on the path with One who helps us at every twist and turn.

For those returning to school this week, I hope you will know that school is a holy time as you struggle with new concepts and grow just a little each day. Remember you aren't meant to be perfect, and that God's love is surrounding you in a warm embrace as you do your best. For those of you who are not headed back to school, I wonder

what wisdom or nurture you might share with a child from your lifelong experience of God through the world? What gifts might be waiting for you in a conversation with a child or teacher whose path looks different from your own?

My prayer for us all is that we enter this Fall season with a spirit of wonder and curiosity, open to exploring whatever God might have for us. I wonder what we might learn about the world this Fall? What will we learn about ourselves? How will our discoveries reveal new facets of God that we have not yet seen?

I'll leave you with these blessings for wherever you find yourself this week as we head off together into the world that God is continually making new.

For us all, from John O'Donohue:

May all that is unforgiven in you
Be released.

May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquilities.

May all that is un-lived in you
Blossom into a future
Graced with love.
Amen.

*From Ordinary Blessings for Parents by Meta
Carlson:*

There is a letting go, entrusting
Your child to the unfamiliar:
Faces, routines, and locations
That will become uniquely theirs.

Connection is folded up today,
Like a quiet blessing
Tucked inside a pocket,
Where it can help them remember

Your love covers all the space
between what they have known
and what is now theirs
to discover for themselves.

*A blessing for our little ones, from Prayers for
Faithful Families by Traci Smith:*

God, remind me you are with me at school this year
As I grow and learn and play.
Help me know you are with me
Each and every day.

Help me be patient and kind
As I learn with my mind!

