

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice: Going to School

This past week the matric results have been released. There is reason to celebrate the hard work and overcoming of very difficult circumstances required to pass Grade 12 in South Africa especially as we enter the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic and so we commend our Grade 12 matriculants of 2021. Today as we light the candle of peace, hope and justice, I would like to draw your attention to some statistics which put our matriculation results into perspective: In the Western Cape in 2009 there were 81 847 learners in Grade 2, in 2018 there were only 61 066 Grade 11 learners and in 2019 there were only 41502 learners who passed matric. SO what happened to all these children and young people along the way, where are the 40345 who started school and did not finish or pass matric? There are even worse statistics for every single province in South Africa.

Let us pray:

Dear God, we pray that the value of getting a good education and potential it has to have an incredible impact on every child's life, their family, and community is recognized. We pray for all the learners who have to make the difficult decision to leave school because the level of poverty they live with makes it impossible to continue to attend school, either because they need to find jobs to support their families, or if they can no longer afford the textbooks, stationery, uniforms or transport required to even get to school. We pray for changes in policies and the necessary action that will ensure that 2022 is the last year learners need to attend schools with pit latrines. We pray for the end to the vandalism and lack of will from government and corporate alike, to ensure that our national rail transport system gets back up and running so that the thousands of learners who rely on getting to school by train can do so again. We pray for an end to the taxi wars that are not only conducted between taxis, but also because of the government, which make it so unsafe for learners to get to school. We think of all the learners who have lost their lives to gun violence or continue to be traumatized because of our unacceptable levels of violence and the way this disrupts schooling and learning every single day. The barbed wire represents all these many facets that continue to make simply 'going to school' in many, many areas of our country a near impossible task to achieve.

The light of the candle however is a reminder that darkness can be overcome. The light is the resilience of the learners who are able to continue to learning and manage to attend school despite these war like circumstances that affect them. The light represents the teachers who care deeply, come in to school on Saturday's, stay after school, and do all in their power to ensure learning and teaching is able to take place. The light represents the many government departments who are doing what they are required to do, sending out social workers, training teachers, making a difference where it is needed. We also thank you God for civil society, for the organisations and individuals who tirelessly campaign to make schools safer, who organize lunches, school uniforms, textbooks, sanitary products, transport and so many other ways which show that care is an action, that love must be practised, that education is a priority and that we must value the lives of every learner to ensure that they are able to simply 'go to school' from Grade R and then stay there until Grade 12.

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