

Blessed are the students who stay in touch with God during their academic life, they will always have a friend by their side. So many times students see college as a good way to escape from church. It is important and very fruitful to pray daily and to be involved in one's parish or campus ministry. Don't wait until you have a test. It is amazing how thoughts of God come at exam time. When I was a campus minister I could always tell it was exam time when daily Mass was overflowing with students!

Blessed are the students, who study and go to all their classes, they will become educated. Unlike high school teachers, very few college professors watch what students do. Most students are free to go to class or not. College calls for greater responsibility. Those who waste their education regret it later. They are often left with big loans and little knowledge to show for them.

Blessed are the students who get involved in extracurricular activities, they usually develop into well-balanced people. Study alone does not make for an educated person. It is very enriching to become part of campus ministry and other student organizations. It helps a student become a well-rounded individual.

Blessed are the students who volunteer to help others, they will deepen their capacity to love. Service to others is a major part of being Christian. There are many opportunities at most schools to reach out to others. Among them are working for Habitat for Humanity, volunteering at homeless shelters, and tutoring. In addition to God's call to love, reaching out helps a person feel good about himself or herself.

Blessed are the students who keep away from drugs, alcohol and other dangerous activity, they are least likely to get into trouble. Using chemical substances may seem fun but this behavior often ends in tragic accidents, pregnancies, poor grades and so on. Furthermore, abusing one's body is sinful.

Blessed are the students, who pray about and think through important decisions, they will probably do God's will. Oftentimes people make major decisions without enough thought or prayer. It is important to learn the art of discernment and reflection to make good choices for one's life.

Blessed are the students, who keep in touch with family and friends, they will have a good support system. In some ways college is a form of liberation. Even so, it is important to stay connected to one's family and the values learned there.

Blessed are the students, who take time to discover their gifts and use them to better the world, they will develop into mature Christians. All of our talents and abilities are gifts from God to be used to build God's kingdom. When we keep those gifts hidden under a bushel basket the world and the church suffer.

May this new academic year be a time of growth and self-discovery for all students everywhere. May each student stay close to the Lord and get to know God more deeply, knowing that God is with him or her in all the ups and downs of life. Good luck, especially to first-year students.