

Everything changed. Nothing was as it was before. Out of the void, God created! Light and darkness, water and land, morning and evening, sun and moon, plants and animals, and human beings, in God's likeness. It was a new beginning, and it was good.

But soon, the people strayed and many lost sight of God.

Again, everything changed. Out of the bonds of slavery, God freed Israel; parting the waters, giving safe passage, protecting against the oppressor, restoring relationship, with glorious triumph. It was a new beginning, and it was good.

But the people struggled, and they lost their way, and drifted far from God.

Once more, everything changed. Into the brokenness of the world, God, in Christ Jesus, came. Human and divine, shining new light, proclaiming Good News, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, tending to the poor, naming the unjust, forgiving the sinful, boldly bestowing love. It was a new beginning, and it was good.

And some believed, and some followed. And some loved Jesus.  
And some were fearful, some resisted.

And then, EVERYTHING changed. Out of profound love for all humanity, God gave Godself in Christ to death. Wrongfully condemned, painfully tortured, put on public display, hearts broken and hope lost. It felt like the end, and it did not feel good.

Hearts were broken, tears were shed, shock and disbelief pervaded. And when hope seemed lost, EVERYTHING CHANGED.

Out of the finality and darkness of death, Jesus rose, resurrected into new life. The stone moved, the tomb empty, tossed linens on the floor, folks in white heralding good news, the women terrified and amazed, the disciples in shock and awe, death defeated. It was a new beginning, and it was very, very good.

Tonight, we are reminded of God's steadfast love for us, and for the blessing of New Beginnings. We celebrate the gift of New Life, given through the death and resurrection of God's beloved Son, Jesus. Having walked with him through the darkness of suffering and death, and acknowledging where we ourselves have gone astray and lost sight of God, we now enter fully into this Holy Mystery, to bask in the brilliance of the light of Christ as we proclaim with gratitude and joy, all that God has done for us.

We all stand on the cusp of New Life. Throughout our lives, we cross over thresholds, each time leaving behind some part of who we have been so to create space for who we are becoming.

We move from elementary to middle school, from being single to getting married to becoming parents, to caring for parents. In some ways, each threshold we cross takes us from life, into death, and then into new life.

The women who loved Jesus, who came to his tomb to anoint him faced a major threshold, wrought with grief and despair. With Jesus' death, they had been thrust from life with Him into the darkness and stark reality of life without him, something they would never have chosen, but now had to learn to navigate. Mark tells us that they were terrified and amazed. And that's how it is with thresholds, with new beginnings.

Zoey, you shared with me your desire to invite God into your life, that you wished to be baptized. God planted a seed of longing within you, and tonight, we will welcome you into the body of Christ. And, as special and significant as Baptism is, I want to also acknowledge that it can be a little daunting. Even as you chose it, it's natural that you might feel both anticipation and anxious, because it's not possible to know exactly what life will look like after, or what your faith may ask of you.

What I can assure you of is this: You are not alone. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are with you and will guide you. Your parents and family are here to support and love you, and you have the love and encouragement of the whole of this church community. Remember, Christianity is a journey, not a destination—and you have many companions on the way. So lean in and trust that as you cross this threshold, God is about to bring forth in you a glorious new beginning.

In closing, I offer you this night a blessing by Irish poet and mystic, John O'Donohue called: **For a New Beginning**, It richly captures the depth, complexity, mystery and wonder each of us face as we step forward in faith, into New Life.

FOR A NEW BEGINNING.

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

Easter Vigil Sermon.  
New Beginnings.

The Rev Laurel Coote

For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety  
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

To Bless the Space Between Us' (US) / Benedictus (Europe)  
Ordering Info: <https://johnodonohue.com/store>  
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