

Reflection | The Season of Liminality, Not Quite Christmas, Not Yet Epiphany  
Sirach & John 1 | Knox-Metropolitan United Church  
The Second Sunday After Christmas | January 2, 2022  
Regina, SK | Treaty 4 Territory | Cameron Fraser

A Blessing for a New Beginning

By John O'Donahue

<https://sage-ing.org/wp-content/uploads/ODonohue-ForaNewBeginning.pdf>

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.

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.

One of the things that appeals to me

About O'Donahue's words here

Is how newness is framed

Not as re-invention

But something more akin to homecoming

There is a gentleness in that energy

And a trusting

A consenting

To a persistent energy

Of the self

Forming and emerging

And the spiritual work

Of discerning

And responding

In the introduction book of blessings,

*To Bless the Space Between Us,*

Which includes this one I've just read

John O'Donahue

Reflects on the idea of threshold

On liminality

*To change is one of the great dreams of every heart – to change the limitations, the sameness, the banality, or the pain. So often we look back on patterns of behavior, the kind of decisions we make repeatedly and that have failed to serve us well, and we aim for a new path or way of living.*

*But change is difficult for us. So often we opt to continue the old pattern, rather than risking the danger of difference. We are also often surprised by change that seems to arrive out of nowhere.*

*A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is a frontier that divides two different territories, rhythms and atmospheres.*

*Indeed, it is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience or a stage of life that it intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up.*

*At this threshold a great complexity of emotions comes alive: confusion, fear, excitement, sadness, hope. This is one of the reasons such vital crossing were always clothed in ritual.*

*It is wise in your own life to be able to recognize and acknowledge the key thresholds; to take your time; to feel all the varieties of presence that accrue there; to listen inward with complete attention until you hear the inner voice calling you forward.*

*The time has come to cross.*

I like the idea of newness calling across a threshold

Possibility speaking with invitation

Into the human heart

Revealing what is possible

Sketching potential

This is to me what our readings signify

An invitation to step across personal and communal threshold

Wherein we are able to name patterns that,

To use O'Donahue's language,

*Have failed to serve us well*

How though, I wonder

Might we create the space

For that inward listening

About which O'Donahue writes

That allows us to hear in the inner voice that is calling us forward

Our readings today

Mingle the terms WORD and WISDOM

They offer an imagining of the Divine

As voice

As call

As beckoning

Inviting us to adopt

A posture

Of response  
Which is an interesting sort of energy  
Yet what's lovely in O'Donahue's words  
Is the gentle reminder  
That response is not always a simple thing  
Speaking into realities of patterned repetition  
Both of our texts, point to a presence  
In the cosmos and human history  
Of a transcendence  
That is accessible  
That calls to the human heart  
Beckoning to be recognized  
Received  
Integrated  
There is a dynamic motion  
Rather than static stratification  
The holy  
The divine  
Less a destination  
More a companion on the journey  
Today is the Second Sunday after Christmas  
It is a moment of liturgical liminality  
No longer  
But not yet  
I wonder if you have a sense within yourself of liminality

A sense of *no longer* mingling with *not yet*

May these texts remind us

That ours is a tradition

That legitimized liminality

That no longer

Not yet

Do not preclude

Home

Wholeness

That the divine presence which is neither destination nor achievement

Holds us in our liminality

Our in-betweenness

Our ever-emerging

Ever coming into being-ness

An ever-opening of the heart

To that which is

This is

I believe what it means to speak of grace

May we therefore

End where we began

A Blessing for New Beginnings

By John O'Donahue

<https://sage-ing.org/wp-content/uploads/ODonohue-ForaNewBeginning.pdf>

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.

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.