

## New Beginnings

- In everyone's life there is change. Change is simply the death of an old way and the resurrection of a new way.
- We see change played out in many ways in people's life. A death or birth in the family, graduation, a new life in Jesus Christ.
- For God so loved the world... God decided to give us a new beginning. God loved us so much that he decided to send His only Son. Since humans are sinful by nature and cannot establish their own righteousness (Rom. 10: 3), then Jesus was and is completely necessary. God wanted to give *us* a new beginning, so that we may someday reside with Him (John 20: 31).
- I've been going through a number of new changes in my life, changes I think I never expected to get to. As I'm sure many of you out there know that four years goes by very fast! I did not realize that it does until very recently and now I have many challenges thrust upon me in a short span of time. But there are certainly some things that have kept me grounded in this time of turbulence. One of those things is family. I have been blessed with an incredible family who supports me in... almost everything that I do. Another thing has been the blessings of all of my friends, or, more simply, community. There has been much drama to be had with that group, but by staying out of it and only acting with compassion to its members, I was able to take only good out of those relationships and not bad. Last, and the most important, was my relationship with God. With all of these transitions, all of these new things happening in my life, most people would be

mystified, and a little disconcerted. But my walk with the Lord has never been more satisfying.

- I have been fazed and mystified before. During my troubled younger teenage years I remember my early explorations of returning to the faith. I asked God, “What do I do? How can someone like me be a Christian? How can I, as an avowed atheist, start over?” I read my Bible, I prayed, and you know what God told me? “I will forgive you. I always have and I always will.” As it says in Acts 2: 38, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This is something I read in my Bible and really took to heart. No matter what we’ve done, God will forgive us! And this simple truth is all it took for me to open my heart and mind to Christ. My new beginning was just starting, but accepting Jesus into my heart was the first step. God was guiding me back to His Son, and I could not be happier with the outcome.
- But enough about me! I heard a story once about a young man who was dating a young woman. They had been dating for a while, but things were beginning to get unstable. The young man was consumed with thoughts that she was cheating on him because of his own fears about losing her and his own insecurities as a man. Because of all this, he cheated on this girl whom he loved. Needless to say, he instantly regretted this. He felt lost and alone, and hadn’t even told his partner yet. He knew that what he had done was wrong, yet he was an agnostic. So how could anything be inherently wrong? He had a couple of churchgoing friends, but didn’t feel like he could talk to them or anyone else for that matter. For the

moment he would wallow in silence. This did not take long to wear thin. So one night, he went into an empty church and said, "God, can I be forgiven?" Soon, this young man accepted Christ into his heart, and has been working on a relationship with God ever since and God has been gradually freeing him from his destructive behavior. This new beginning allows him to have a new life opened up to him, one in which his acknowledgement of his sins and the knowledge that God will forgive him helped free him from sin.

- "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5: 17). Paul says this in his second letter to the Corinthians to articulate this message of a new beginning. After all, those in Christ will be made new. We as people do not do good things ourselves, but rather when we accept Christ into our hearts God does good things through us.
- As we heard in our New Testament reading today (Acts 8: 1-2, 9: 1-22), Paul becomes a new man with his vision on the road to Damascus, with Christ literally appearing before him and making him temporarily blind, *so that he could truly see*. And then Ananias comes to see Saul at Jesus' command and baptizes him. Despite all of the Christians that Saul has persecuted and put to death, Jesus wants to use him to do his work. Saul learns that he is forgiven and becomes one of the greatest apostles of Jesus Christ. This can happen with ANYONE in the entire world. Every human being is capable of receiving a new beginning in Christ. This is why I wish to become a Christian minister: To help others to find Jesus. and I would like to thank all of the people out there whom I will be leaving in five

days. You have all helped at one point or another on my walk with God, and for that I am eternally grateful. God Bless you all, and Amen!