Devotional Reflection, Monday, August 11, 2026
Proper 14, the week of the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Ongoing New Beginnings

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
3Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' . . . 5Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." 8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 979)
AM Psalm 89:1-18; PM Psalm 89:19-52
Judges 12:1-7; Acts 5:12-26; John 3:1-21

Today we celebrate the Feast of Lawrence of Rome. (See below).

David's Reflections

Today's Gospel reading brought to mind a saying from Nobel laureate Eli Wiesel. "According to Jewish tradition, creation did not end with man, it began with him. When he created man, God gave him a secret--and that secret was not how to begin but how to begin again. In other words, it is not given to man to begin; that is God's alone. But it is given to man to begin again--and he does so every time he chooses to defy death and side with the living." +

John's Gospel, in today's reading, quotes Jesus speaking of new beginnings; he speaks of seeing and entering God's kingdom. With what can we compare the experience of coming into direct contact with God's saving love and placing our lives

in God's care by faith? Holy writ teems with lively images. Some that capture my attention include finding buried treasure (Matthew 13), having seeds produce a rich harvest (Mark 4), scattered sheep being gathered (Luke 15), a tiny seed becoming a huge shrub (Mark 4), and the birth of an infant, a new beginning (here).+

What would it be like to have your past life, with all its failures, become irrelevant to your future? What would it be like to feel like you had been reborn, like you were a newborn with an entirely new future and new life energy? What would it feel like to believe that God was constantly touching your life and that new birthings were happening, new growth was recurring regularly?

That's what today's Gospel offers us, a new beginning based on God's saving love and God's grace, a grace that not only gives us a new beginning but transforms the ugly and the bent into something beautiful. The Christian experience begins with just such a new beginning and is punctuated with periods of renewal, when the energy of that initial beginning rushes through our lives anew.

What do you feel when holding a newborn in your arms? What a bundle of pure potentiality with no history of accomplishment to commend itself to you!!! Imagine God responding to you and me in a way similar to our response to that newborn, loving us as pure potentiality with no history to commend us. Imagine life filled with new beginnings, beginnings that bring life out of death, possibilities out of failure, and beauty out of ugliness.

The singing group U 2, on their CD "All that You Can't Leave Behind," sing a song entitled "Grace." They are referencing God's grace and love,, from which new beginnings spring.

Grace, she takes the blame
She covers the shame
Removes the stain
It could be her name
. . . . . .
What once was hurt
What once was friction
What left a mark no longer stings

Because Grace makes beauty
Out of ugly things @

+Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God*, (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 31.
@U2 CD "All that You Can't Leave Behind" (Universal International Music, 2000)

Collect of the Day, Proper 14. The eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP, 232)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Lawrence of Rome, deacon and martyr (died 10 Aug 258 CE).
http://satucket.com/lectionary/Laurence.htm

Collect of the Feast of Lawrence of Rome
Almighty God, by whose grace and power your servant Laurence triumphed over suffering and despised death: Grant that we may be steadfast in service to the poor and outcast, and may share with him in the joys of your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for the Renewal of Life
O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness while it was day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

A Prayer for Seeing Others as Community
Gracious God, thank you for the diversity of human beings that surround me on every side. In the ideas, in the hopes, in the dreams, and in the struggles of those who share this earthly life, let me find that through a community of human beings I am made fuller and more alive. Let the fullness given by community give me the

courage to offer my own unique self with humility to the lives of others. As we all share in the life that you have so graciously given us, may we be the lights of your love to one another. Amen.
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http://www.explorefaith.org/prayer/essays/communitypray.html

A Prayer for Light
Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission
O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100, 257)

Daily Office Gospel, John 3:1-21
3:1Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' 3Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' 4Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' 5Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." 8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' 9Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' 10Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 11'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly

things? 13No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*