

Life Sunday 2025

John 1:1-11 “A New Beginning”

Rev. Paul Clark, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fowler, Michigan and President of Lutherans For Life of Michigan  
lutheransforlife.org

A wedding is a sign of a new beginning. So, when Jesus attends the wedding at Cana and there does His first miracle, or sign, of changing the water into wine, He is proclaiming to unworthy sinners like us a new beginning. Wine is a Biblical symbol of joy. Jesus comes to bring us this joy by witnessing this marriage of heaven and earth in the coming of the Son of God in flesh and blood. God has not forsaken His people. We are not left dead in our sins and trespasses. The Heavenly Bridegroom has come, and by the shedding of His holy blood on the cross has made His Bride, the Church, glorious. Though we now may endure much tribulation in a fallen world, we have A NEW BEGINNING IN CHRIST. We have been inaugurated into a new creation—a kingdom that will never end.

In every Baptism, we witness this new beginning in a particularly splendid way. There at the font, the one whose very life is a gift of God now receives the gift of new birth and new life by water and the Spirit. This new life will blossom into a glorious future, one that will go far beyond the tear-marked days of this earthly life, one that will go beyond death itself, one that inaugurates us into God’s family as beloved children of the Heavenly Father.

We rejoice at the “new wine” of our Baptism into Christ. For there, God has called us by name. He has promised us His presence, His help, His mercy. He has forgiven our sins, wiped clean our slate, and made us heirs of His glory.

On this day, when the Church observes this episode of the wedding at Cana, we also observe LIFE SUNDAY. How appropriate! THE LORD OF LIFE, who gives to us our very breath, is the Lord who turns water into wine, who fashions a new creation, who draws joy even from sadness, who forgives sins and brings us forth as new people in the life-giving springs of our baptismal bath.

The One who gives us our new beginning in Baptism is the same God who fashioned us and gave us our first beginning in the womb. It is God who brings forth life. It is God who created us, who “knits us together,” so that we are “intricately and wonderfully made.” Some say that the Bible never mentions abortion, and thus

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we should not speak against it. How far from the truth! The decisive moral truth of what Scripture teaches is this: Human beings are such from fertilization. And—it is a sin to shed innocent blood.

“You shall not murder.” That is the commandment. The commandment does not distinguish between the demonic murder of children in a school classroom, a horrific terrorist attack on innocent people, or the demonic dismemberment and destruction of babies in the womb. They are the same in God’s eyes. One cannot reasonably be appalled at the one without being just as appalled at the other.

In our world, many loud and angry voices seek to cover up and disguise the killing of unborn babies by placing abortion under the banner of women’s reproductive freedom and health care. They call it a matter of a woman’s choice. We would never use that logic to defend a madman who slaughters innocent children at a school and then as his defense calls it his “right to choose.”

There is no right to do a wrong.

The Hebrew word for mercy is *racham*, which also is the word for “womb.” Perhaps the reason that the Lord chose that word to express mercy is that nothing more clearly expresses mercy than the tender love that a mother has toward her unborn baby. No place on earth should be a safer refuge for that tiny innocent child than the womb, the place of *racham*, the place of mercy. Abortion invades and destroys that refuge, that mercy, at its very source. Sadly, abortion has become a part of the brutalization of human life, a sad commentary on the cruelty of human nature.

Of course, there is one who feeds off this violence, this horror, this degrading of what it means to be human—and that is the old evil foe, our ancient enemy—Satan.

But then enters Jesus into a world such as this, bringing into this realm of sorrow and this valley of death the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Won for us—how? By His suffering and death on the cross, for He so loved us that He willingly bore our punishment, covering the guilt of our sin and shame with His own holy and precious blood.

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This account of the wedding at Cana is so much more than the story of Jesus coming to a quaint country wedding. The changing of water into the very best wine is a sign of who He is and what He has come to bring. It means that God is now with us. This sign points to Christ as Messiah, Savior of the world, who alone can forgive us our sins and make us free to be who we were meant to be. Jesus Christ alone is the One who can save us from sin, death, and Satan’s power.

Many have been devastated by the sin of abortion. Not only the babies who have lost their lives, but the women, and men also, who have carried around the guilt for what they have done and may have been haunted by nightmares, sadness, and many times depression. Post-abortion syndrome is very sad, and it is very real.

Many women are simply lied to about what happens in an abortion. It is not just a procedure. It cannot be disguised behind words such as “termination of pregnancy.” Point of fact: A termination of pregnancy means the death of a child. It’s that simple.

Years ago, I heard the story of a woman who had been misled into having an abortion and now speaks as an advocate of Life, trying to help women to choose life for their child, considering adoption as the godly alternative if they felt they could not raise a child on their own. The speaker told how she had been lied to about what abortion is, that it was merely a mass of cells in her womb. Then she happened to see the clearly human shape of the being she had killed as the body was rushed away by an attendant. In her shame and guilt, she went to her pastor and confessed her sin. But he made light of it and said, “It’s okay, don’t worry about it!” The woman said that did not help her at all. She knew it was not OK. She knew she had done evil. What she needed was confession and absolution, not excuses and approval.

Pastors who are afraid to speak of the sin of abortion cannot offer the solution—which is the same for all sin: Repent and believe in the Gospel!

In Christ’s blood, your sins and my sins, like fiery darts, are extinguished and can harm us no longer.

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That is what the true Church of Christ offers, dear people. Forgiveness to those who confess their sins. Mercy from the God of all mercy. Sin and guilt and shame are not taken away by self-help books, going on talk shows, or having a wolf disguised as a shepherd shrug off your sins and say, “It’s okay.” Sin and shame and guilt are taken away by one thing only—the blood of Jesus Christ—which cleanses us from all sin. Our sins have already been punished in Him, on that cross. Jesus bodily rose from the tomb so that we would know that now even death itself cannot harm those who belong to Jesus and trust in Him alone, for as He lives, so we live as well.

Here, in Christ’s Word, in Holy Baptism, in the body and blood of our Lord given out in His Communion, there are real answers to real problems. There is forgiveness for sin, help for the guilty, the loving arms of Jesus to welcome sinners and cover their shame, to bring to them a ray of hope, to give them His promise of a new beginning.

We live in such a turbulent time. In many ways, we have witnessed the destruction of much of the foundation of Western civilization. The boundaries between right and wrong, and good and evil, are blurred and even erased. Many who hold positions of power have some responsibility in this, by making and enforcing rules and laws that may be entirely opposed to God’s Law and will. But ultimately, we have often turned a blind eye to the evil we see around us and have failed to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Of this, we must repent.

A man whose name you will recognize once said this: “Once the Church’s voice is stifled in the public square, the role of culture-makers shifts to the secular realm. The State will see this need and fill that need itself—in the name of national unity. In the case of Nazi Germany, it realized that it was now the State’s educational role to create a unifying worldview for the nation ...” This was spoken by Adolf Hitler to a group of Nazi leaders in the year 1933.

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If the Church—that is—if we as Christians—do not speak—if we allow our voices to be stifled in the public square—then the State will take over (in fact, in many ways, has already taken over) the molding and creation of a new secular society where those in power tell the people what is right and what is wrong.

Jesus tells us that we are to be a light in this world of darkness. He is the True Light, who shines that light into the dark places of the heart. There is only One whom we follow, one Shepherd whose voice we hear, the One who can save and defend us and teach us true right from wrong.

An old Welsh hymn says:

*I'd not seek a life that's easy,*

*Gold and pearls so little mean;*

*Rather seek a life that's joyful,*

*A heart that's honest, a heart that's clean.*

A heart that's clean. That is what Jesus does for us. He creates in us a clean heart. He renews us by His Spirit. He gives us a new beginning in the saving bath of our Holy Baptism, where our sins are washed off onto Christ, where His righteousness and holiness are washed onto us.

Only in Jesus can we continue the battle against the devil. Only in Jesus can we fight this good fight for the lives of our babies, our children, the elderly, the handicapped, the suffering, and those who are dying. In Jesus, we can proclaim the dignity and value of human life. In Jesus, the woman who has been emotionally and even physically scarred by abortion can find peace, forgiveness, and rest. In Jesus, each of us can know what it means to have God's approval, to know we are forgiven of our sins, to have the promise and the absolute assurance of eternal life in a better world—a world without sin, without abortion, without death—a world that you and I inherit by grace alone, through the holy blood of the Lamb who was slain and raised again.

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A NEW BEGINNING. Water into wine. Joy at the WEDDING FEAST to come, when Jesus, the Bridegroom, welcomes His Bride, the Church, into the halls of victory and triumph. Then we shall sit at the festive table with the King, who shall fill our cups with the very best wine and say, "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Yes, our God is the God of Life, and IN CHRIST, we have a NEW LIFE that will never end.

Amen.